

**HEART 2 HEART**

**VOL 6 ISSUE 7, JULY 2008**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<u>Page No.</u>	<u>Section</u>
<b>03</b>	<b>BETWEEN YOU AND US</b>
	<b>SPIRITUAL BLOSSOMS</b>
<b>06</b>	SATHYA SAI SPEAKS: Cultivate Love to Achieve Fullness
<b>09</b>	CONVERSATIONS WITH SAI: SATHYOPANISHAD - Part 6
<b>16</b>	<i>CHINNA KATHA</i> – Is the Lord the Greatest
<b>17</b>	<b><u>COVER STORY: THE ZENITH OF HOLISTIC LEARNING</u></b>
	<b>FEATURE ARTICLES</b>
<b>51</b>	QUEST FOR INFINITY – Part 17
<b>71</b>	THE LIGHT TO DISPELL ALL GLOOM
<b>75</b>	WEDDING VALUES TO THE BUSINESS OF WEDDING
	<b>SERIAL ARTICLES</b>
<b>82</b>	THE DIVINE STORY OF SHIRDI SAI PARTHI SAI - Part 43
<b>88</b>	MUSINGS ON THE AVATARS – Part 5
	<b>WINDOW TO SAI SEVA</b>
<b>97</b>	CLEANING UP HOMES AND HEARTS IN THE CAPITAL CITY
<b>105</b>	<b>PRASHANTI DIARY</b>
	<b>SWAMI AND ME</b>
<b>121</b>	MOTHER SAI - MY HEART AND SOUL
<b>127</b>	THE NEUROSCIENTIST DISCOVERS NEW LIFE AT HIS FEET
	<b>H2H SPECIAL</b>
<b>135</b>	MESMERIZING MOMENTS WITH THE DIVINE MASTER – Part 4

**SAI WORLD NEWS**

**143** VALUES SWIRL IN THE VORTEX OF VIRTUES

**GET INSPIRED**

**150** THE "I CAN'T" FUNERAL

**153** TOO NICE TO SHARE

**155** THE OVERLOOKED TRUTH ABOUT OURSELVES

**TEST YOUR SPIRITUAL QUOTIENT**

**157** MULTI-FAITH QUIZ

**167** QUIZ ON DIVINE GURU PURNIMA DISCOURSES

**175** QUIZ ON GURU PURNIMA CELEBRATIONS

**THE HEALING TOUCH**

**180** DANCING TO LIFE'S NEW TUNE

**184** YOUR SAY

## **BETWEEN YOU AND US**

**Dear Reader,**

"The mediocre teacher informs. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires," says an old proverb. But there is a fifth category, which is extremely rare. And that is the teacher who enlightens. Such a teacher is an alchemist who, almost by magic, not only illumines your mind and softens your heart, but also opens up your soul. Anybody who comes in contact with such a being feels like he or she is born anew. And that is the reason why whenever such a personality has walked on this earth, it has been a phenomenon that has charted a new destiny for not one or two or a few hundreds, but thousands and sometimes millions of individuals. And that is when new civilizations are born, world culture is enriched, the human race discovers a new philosophy, and mankind finds a semblance of eternal peace and perennial happiness that has been its quest since time immemorial.

Just look at the way Jesus has entered and stayed put in the hearts of nearly one-third of humanity on this planet. Two thousand five hundred years after His *nirvana*, the Buddha and His teachings are the life-breadth of over five hundred million Buddhists spread all over the world. Today, at least 20 per cent of the world population derives its strength, solace and inspiration from the gospel revealed by Prophet Mohammed. Mention the name of Guru Nanak Dev and not less than 23 million people will be willing to lay down their lives to protect the honour of their Guru. Even in recent history, the influence which Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa had, and continues to have, in the minds and hearts of thousands of spiritual aspirants in India and abroad is extraordinary by any measure. All these great masters, apparently, had varied approaches to communicate their pristine philosophies, but at the fundamental level, their mission was only one: To awaken man and reunite him with God. In their *modus operandi* too there was one aspect which was common: All of them had youth as the principal recipients of their priceless doctrine.

If Jesus chose twelve young men as His apostles; the two chief disciples of the Buddha, Sariputra and Mahamoggallāna, too were young ascetics. When Prophet Mohammed had to undergo a lot of hardships and actually fight a holy war, it was again his young army of devoted followers who rose to the occasion remarkably. And how Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa longed for Swami Vivekananda is a popular legend. And we all know that if the name of Sri Ramakrishna immediately rings a bell in the mind of every Indian, and their head bows down in reverence, it is largely because of what Swami Vivekananda and a few other close disciples did to take the message of their master beyond the narrow confines of the temple garden at Dakshineswar. It is the same with every great Master.

But for the twelve apostles, Christianity would probably have been at most a country's or a region's religion. In the case of Sikhism, it was the succession

of nine Sikh Gurus after the primordial Guru Nanak Dev, culminating with the young and fiery Guru Gobind Singh, who created the vibrant faith that we are familiar with today. All these disciples dreamt of creating a world where there is "the brotherhood of man and fatherhood of God" as their masters envisioned. Each one of them was successful in arousing the God 'sleeping' in man, but to a restricted extent, limited by their capabilities.

But the possibilities become infinite and truly staggering when the Source of all Enlightenment, the Master of Masters, Himself descends on earth! The whole process of awakening mankind acquires God-speed. And that is the reason why a tiny hamlet in an obscure location in a matter of just a few decades has today become Rome for thousands for Christians, Varanasi and Mathura for millions of Hindus, Mecca and Medina for a multitude of Muslims, and Lumbini for innumerable Buddhist all over the world. The way Bhagavan Baba, has touched and transformed a colossal mass of mankind – personally to each one at that – is absolutely unprecedented. In a landmark discourse delivered four decades ago on May 17, 1968, Bhagavan Himself declared, "On previous occasions when God incarnated on earth, the bliss of recognising Him was vouchsafed only after the physical embodiment had left the world...But, ponder a moment on this Sathya Sai Manifestation...What is it that brings to Him the adoration of millions from all over the world?... This is a human form in which every Divine entity, every Divine Principle,...ascribed by man to God, are manifest."

Apart from personal transformations that have redirected the lives of millions God-ward (Read [Swami and Me](#) section), each initiative of His in the sphere of social upliftment, has been an eye-opener, that has enriched the lives of millions like never before. Be it the mammoth Sri Sathya Sai Drinking Water Project, or the one-of-its-kind Super Speciality Hospitals (See [Healing Touch](#)); or the plethora of initiatives to empower the poor, the orphaned and the disadvantaged of the rural areas. But the most amazing aspect is the cascading effect these phenomenal projects have had in inspiring any number of such projects, big and small, by Sai devotees all over the world, which is as mind-boggling as it is countless.

But among all the direct initiatives of the Divine in the present era, the one that stands out unquestionably like a beacon for the rest of the humanity, and for every future generation to come, is the mission of Bhagavan Baba that has as its focus - the youth. This energetic lot is priority number one when God Himself comes down too, but unlike with great messengers of the Lord, now the scale and its impact are huge. It is a fulfillment of the dream of every enlightened being on earth concerned about humanity's welfare. To show you how it happens and how unbelievably true it can be, we have in this issue the cover story "[The Zenith of Holistic Learning](#)". It is the most inspiring and sublime story of the [Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School](#) established by Bhagavan Baba in Prashanthi Nilayam.

In a divine discourse delivered a year before this school formally started as an English medium school affiliated to the CBSE, Swami said, "A teacher has to be so full of compassion and love that he understands and sympathises with

the students, and their struggle to expand and to blossom.” Have you heard of a teacher in the present times who goes to the extent of sweeping the pupil's room, washing his clothes and keeping awake the whole night so that the student blooms without any impediments whatsoever? Or for that matter, do you know of any school in the current time where a student, who has a very crucial examination of his life the next day, sits next to the bedside of his sick classmate and reads out chapters and lessons simply because he could not study selfishly when his own roommate was in such a pitiable state?

This is only a tiny glimpse of what goes on inside the sacred precincts of [Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School](#). “Our endeavour is to create balanced and dynamic personalities who are physically strong, intellectually sharp, emotionally stable, and at the same time spiritually advanced,” says Mr. Habbu, the first Principal of this school. When you read this cover story you will see how this goal has found fulfillment in the integrated personalities of hundreds of students who have passed out of this school, or are currently pursuing their unique curriculum with great passion and dedication.

Like every project of Bhagavan, this School too is a model for humanity to watch, understand, appreciate and emulate. It is heartening that world over today there are many walking on the trail blazed by this school from Australia to England, South Africa to Thailand, Zambia to Canada. In the [Sai World News](#) section of this issue, you will find how the inspired students of the Sathya Sai School of Canada are reaching out to their community, nation and worldwide to spread the message of Truth, Peace and Love.

On Guru Pournima Day, the sacred festival in which the preceptor is venerated and worshipped, way back in 1992, Swami said, “Guru Pournima is not performed by circumambulation and offerings to the Guru. What is the real offering? It is the offering of one's love... There is only one Guru and that is God.” “There is only way you can describe God and that is ‘Love’,” Swami explained on this occasion in 2004, and added, “Strengthen this love...there is nothing that can liberate you more easily than pure and selfless love.”

On this sacred month of Guru Pournima, let this be our gift to our Supreme Divine Master – our pure, unsullied, unwavering and unconditional love.

Loving Regards,  
Heart2Heart Team

## **SPIRITUAL BLOSSOMS**

### **SATHYA SAI SPEAKS**

#### **Cultivate Love to Achieve Fullness**

*Dear readers, on July 18 this year falls the sacred festival of Guru Poornima. It is the day on which the Guru, or the preceptor, is adored and worshipped. Marking the first festival in the academic calendar of Sri Sathya Sai University, this festival is much awaited for by both Swami's students and His devotees. For one, this day, Bhagavan Baba, the Supreme Teacher, has always blessed His students and devotees with an enlightening discourse. Below are extracts from His message delivered on this occasion way back in the year 1983.*

Even when the Divine appears in human form, moves freely amongst men and women, and is near in various ways to people, only a few are able to recognize Divinity in its physical form. Remember it is not easy to recognize the nature of the Divine through the corporeal form alone. You need a true *guru* (spiritual preceptor) to reveal the real nature of Divinity. And such a *guru* has been equated with the Trinity Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. The devotee who regards God Himself as his *guru* will not have any difficulties. Today, many who are looked upon as *gurus* utter the *manthras* (sacred formula) in the ear, but they also stretch their palms for money. In everything they do, they expect money. Such *gurus* are "*baadha*" (harmful) *gurus* and not "*bodha*" (enlightening) *gurus*.

The true *guru* is like an ophthalmic surgeon. The surgeon removes the film in the patient's eye and restores his natural vision. In the same way the *guru* should also remove the veil of ignorance and attachment that blurs the vision of his disciples and restore their natural spiritual vision.

What is the reward one should give to such a *guru*? On *Guru Poornima* day, it is the practice for disciples to offer *Padha Puja* (offering worship to *Guru's* holy feet) and give *Dakshina* (thanksgiving offering) to the *Guru*. But for this you should understand the significance of the Full Moon. It is a day on which the Moon shines in all his fullness, without any blemish. It is a day of purity when the Moon sheds its cool rays on the earth.

The Moon is the deity that controls the mind. And only the day on which the mind is rid of the darkness of ignorance and achieves fullness of illumination, is the real *Guru Poornima* day for man. Looking merely at the full moon in the sky and calling it *Guru Poornima* is only worshipping the external, while internally there is a *sunna* (void). It is only when you have cleanse your heart by getting rid of ignorance, sorrow, worry, greed, and envy, that you can celebrate your *Guru Poornima* and realise the fullness of your reality.

## **Carry with You the Divine Experience and Enlarge It**

To achieve this *poornathvam* (fullness) you have to cultivate *Prema* (love). You have to go through all the three stages of *shravana*, *manana* and *nidhi dhyasana* (hearing, meditating and practicing) to achieve the goal of human existence. You must all realise that the relationship between you and Me is not related only to the physical body. Do not waste your time thinking only of the physical relationship. The body is a passing thing. You should concentrate on the attainment of that which is permanent and beyond the limitations of time and space. You have seen for yourself and experienced the Divine here. You must carry this experience with you and enlarge it by contemplating on it internally.

As long as we are involved with external appearances, we will have to carry the burden of doubts and weakness of faith, for we will not be able to get rid of involvement in unnecessary things. Faith is like a live volcano and doubts are like seeds. No seed will sprout on such a volcano. If the doubts multiply, it means that your faith is weak and unstable. It is like an extinct volcano. If your faith is strong, no doubts will ever crop up. Where there are doubts, there can be no faith.

But remember we alone are responsible for our doubts. The Divine acts only as a witness. While the Divine shows you the path to self-realization, your doubts arise or disappear because of your past karma (action). To realise Divinity you must first get rid of all your doubts. From time to time, God subjects you to various tests. These are not intended to be punishments as you may imagine. These are intended to strengthen your faith.

## **Look upon God Alone as Your True *Guru***

Arjuna himself was subjected to such a test by Krishna on the eve of the Kurukshethra battle. Arjuna was worried about how to wage the war against his kinsmen and what strategy he should adopt. Krishna took him to a forest in the evening. It was twilight. The light of knowledge was setting and the darkness of ignorance was emerging. Krishna wanted to find out whether Arjuna was fit for receiving the *Geethopadhesa* (spiritual initiation to Geetha) the next day. He pointed out to Arjuna a bird on a tree and asked him whether it was a peacock. Arjuna said, "Yes, my Lord". "No, no. It is a dove," observed Krishna. Arjuna immediately said, "Yes, it is a dove." Krishna then said, "You senseless fellow. It is not a dove but a crow!" "Yes, Lord! It is a crow," said Arjuna. Krishna then told Arjuna, "You have no power of discrimination at all. You cannot decide whether it is a peacock, dove or crow and you are only saying 'yes' to whatever I say. Should you not have this much of understanding?" Arjuna replied, "Krishna, if one does not know Your real nature, one may attempt to agree or disagree with You. But I have understood the truth about You. If I declare that it is not a peacock, a dove or a crow, You have the power to turn it into a peacock, a dove or a crow. I have therefore no need to enquire into what it is. Your word alone matters for me. That is sufficient authority for me." When Arjuna displayed such implicit faith, Krishna

felt that Arjuna was fit to receive the message of the Geetha. And Hence Krishna told him "*Nimittha maathram Bhava!*" ("Be thou My instrument").

### **Have Faith in God's Words**

Therefore, the first requisite is deepening of one's faith in the words of the Lord. It is not possible to know the Lord by bookish knowledge or by human intelligence. When the Lord comes in human form, His measureless powers are not to be judged by looking at His age, size or innocent behaviour. Such judgment will only lead to greater misunderstanding of the Divine. When child Krishna was brought before His mother Yashodha and was accused of eating mud, Krishna protested to His mother that He was not an infant, or a naughty boy or a madcap to eat mud. Krishna then revealed to His mother His divinity. The *Avathaar* is not to be judged by reference to age or actions.

On this holy day of *Guru Poornima*, take a resolve to purify your minds and to install in your hearts the Supreme Lord. Look upon God alone as your true *Guru*.

- *Divine Discourse on Guru Poornima at Prasanthi Nilayam, 24 July, 1983*



## CONVERSATIONS WITH SAI

### **Satyopanishad - Part 6: Direct Directions from the Divine**

*Dear reader, in response to positive feedback to this section where we have a dialogue with the Divine, we continue with Prof. Anil Kumar's "Satyopanishad" after completing the serial Dr. John Hislop's "Conversations with Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba" in January 2008,*

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

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

## CHAPTER 2 - TRENDS IN SOCIETY (Continued from the previous issue)

**Anil Kumar:** Swami! As we think of the way in which our life is going, we find it confusing and disheartening. We also doubt if it is going in the right direction or not. You are our only refuge. Kindly guide us.

**Bhagavan:** You know *mrdangam*, the South Indian musical instrument, which like a drum, has to be beaten on both the sides as you play. Your life is like a rat caught in that *mrdangam*. If the *mrdangam* is beaten on one side, the rat runs to the other side, and vice versa, as there is no way out for it. Similarly, having been fed up with this world, you think of God. When God tests you, you again drift towards the world. Your movement between the world and God is like that of the rat. This is not the proper way.

A small example: Two students competed with each other in a tournament of eating bananas. One student wanted to eat the outer skin of every fruit first so that he could finish eating the soft pulp part next. The other student planned to eat the soft part first and the skin next. Accordingly, they started eating. The first student having eaten the outer skin of every fruit first had his belly full of that stuff and he could not eat any sweet pulp. So he was defeated, and suffered from stomach ache and indigestion. The second student ate a belly full of the pulp of every fruit, and hence couldn't eat the skin of the fruits. So, he too lost in the competition. All the same, he remained healthy.

Similar is the case with those people who are after worldly desires and sensual pleasures. They will have to end their lives in misery finding no cure for *bhavaroga*, the ailment of worldly attachment. This is equal to the condition of the first student who ate only the outer skin of the banana first in the

tournament. But those who think of God are like the second student who ate the soft pulp. They grow stronger in divine life.

Life should start from the point of *dasoham*, 'I am your servant'. Fill its middle with the relentless enquiry, *koham*, "Who am I?" End it with full awareness of the identity of the individual self with God '*soham*', 'I am God'. This is the correct way of life.

Man should realise that the happiness and peace he essentially needs are not present in this mundane world. A simple example: A person went to a hotel. The waiter? asked him, "What shall I serve you?" The person said, "I want *idli* and *sambar*". Then the bearer, taken by great surprise, said, "What Sir! Have you not seen the board hanging over there! This is a military non-vegetarian hotel, Sir!" Likewise, how can you expect items like *Palav*, *Biryani* and chicken in an Udupi Brahmin vegetarian hotel?

In the same manner, there is a board attached to this world, *anityam asukham lokam*, meaning "This world is temporary and full of misery." How then do you expect peace and happiness in this world? That is why in the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna says, *mam bhajasva*, meaning, 'Think of Me or worship Me or be immersed in Me or surrender to Me'. You should lead your life in full knowledge of these facts.

**Anil Kumar:** Swami! How should we conduct ourselves socially? What are social norms?

**Bhagavan:** You should forget two things: the help you have given to others and the harm others have done to you. Moreover, you should remember two things: the help that others have given to you and the harm you have done to others. Then there will be no ego, pride, jealousy, envy, hatred, and other evil tendencies in you.

You should also note another important thing. However small a fault or mistake there is in you, take it as something big. At the same time, when you notice a big mistake in others, you should consider it as a very small one. Take your own goodness as tiny and that of others as mighty. This attitude helps you to correct yourself, improve yourself, and enables you to forgive and forget the lapses of others.

But, what happens today is quite the opposite. Everyone magnifies his own goodness and minimises that of others, considers his own Himalayan blunders as small as an anthill, while he gives Himalayan magnitude even to the smallest mistakes of others. This is the cause of all conflicts and infighting.

There are still two more extreme categories of people. Some of them portray their lapses as merits, project their mistakes as right things, and try to focus on their virtues, which are actually missing in them. Then, there is the last category of people who are even worse than demons. These are the people who attribute faults, mistakes, and defects to others, which are all false, and totally ignore their merits. Correct your own mistakes first. Judge others by

their merits and not by their faults. Seek out your own faults and others' merits.

**Anil Kumar:** Swami! Many people feel that they are too busy to have rest. How, then, is one to take rest?

**Bhagavan:** Change of work is rest. You should never be idle. You should not be lazy. Laziness is rust and dust that ultimately bursts. But work is rest and best. If you are tired of a particular piece of work, change to another. Change of work is rest.

**Anil Kumar:** Swami! We worry a lot. Sometimes we fall sick also due to worry. What is worry? Please tell us how not to worry?

**Bhagavan:** In my opinion, there is nothing like worry. If you enquire in depth, you will know that there is no worry at all in this world. It is merely psychological. Worry is mentally created fear. That is all! Nothing more! It is all your imagination.

At times you feel guilty. So, you worry remembering your past, which is beyond recovery. By no effort can you recover it. Past is past. Then, why worry about the past? Is there any sense in it? You may worry about the future. This is also useless in my opinion. Why? Because the future is uncertain, anything may happen. Who knows? The future is unknown. Why, then, should you worry about the future? What do you gain by that?

Understand clearly that everything is in the present. It is not simple present, it is omnipresent. How? In the present lie the results of the past. The present is the foundation of the future. The seed of today is out of the tree you grew yesterday, and it will germinate and grow into a tree tomorrow. So, worry is useless. Hence, never worry about anything.

**Anil Kumar:** Swami! Nowadays many educated people waste their time, money and energy in towns and cities. Bhagavan, we are eager to know your views on this subject.

**Bhagavan:** "Time is God". In your prayers you say, *kalaya namah, kalakalaya namah, kalatitaya namah*, and so on. Time is divine. You should not waste time. It is a sin to waste or misuse time. Everybody must follow time. God is the master of time. Time waste is life waste. Haste makes waste, waste makes worry, so do not be in a hurry. We should perform good actions and thus spend our time in a sacred way. Youth and a river will never flow backwards. When you pass the stage of youth, it will not come back. The river water flowing forward will never retreat. Therefore, you should consider time a very precious commodity.

You have also pointed out that money is wasted by many educated people. This is very bad. Waste of money is evil. You should not misuse money. Remember always, much money makes many more wrong things. Much money leads you into bad habits. You should spend money on welfare

programmes. You should express gratitude to society, which has been responsible for your present status, by spending money on service activities. You should sacrifice for the poor and needy. *Na karmana na prajaya dhanena, tyagenaike amrtatva manasuh*. 'You attain *moksha* or liberation only by sacrifice. No action, no offspring, no possession or property ever equals sacrifice.'

In the human body, blood should always circulate. Similarly, money should circulate in society. It should not stagnate in the hands of a few persons. If blood does not circulate, there develops on the body a boil or a tumour. If you run short of money, it is difficult to manage things. At the same time, too much money spoils you. It should be like your shoes that fit your feet exactly. If the shoes are loose, you cannot walk; if they are tight, then also you find it tough to walk freely. Your shoes should always be of the exact size of your feet. So also, money should neither be too little nor too much for you. Bear in mind what I tell repeatedly and caution you. Money comes and goes, but morality comes and grows.

Morality consists of proper utilisation of energy and other resources. You should not waste energy in any form. You should not waste water. Do not waste food; *annam brahma*, 'Food is God'. You can eat till your hunger is appeased. There is nothing wrong in it. There are many who are starving. There are many who do not have enough food to eat. What is the prayer you say before you take your food?

*brahmarpanam brahma havih brahmagnau brahman a hutam, brahmaiva tena gantavyam, brahmakarma samadhina. aham vaisvanaro bhutva praninam dehamas'ritah, pranapana samayuktah pacamyannam caturvidham.*

"Oh God! You are in the form of Vaisvanara. You verily digest and assimilate the food that I eat. I offer the food that I eat. I offer the food to you. You alone supply its essence to all parts of my body". This is the meaning of the prayer that you say before you take your food. Therefore, you should not waste food. It is a sin to waste it.

I want you to place a ceiling on your desires. This is possible only if you decide and pledge not to waste time, money, food and energy. All the five elements of nature - earth, water, air, fire, and space are divine. You should be highly reverential and grateful to these five. Always consider them divine.

**Anil Kumar:** Swami! When we are not happy with the type of education and the money we receive, is it right to feel that they are useless? Should we give up these two? What is the way out?

**Bhagavan:** It is not correct. In this world, nothing is useless. Everything depends on your mind. Your thoughts and counter thoughts are responsible for all that you feel, say, and do. God created this world for the benefit and the betterment of humankind. Use, abuse, and misuse depend on your mind. Therefore, you go through certain experiences and the corresponding results. In fact, in education there is nothing wrong, for *prajnanam brahma*,

'Knowledge is God'. So education can't be defective. When your mind is pure, your education confers wisdom and spiritual awakening on you. But a polluted mind makes use of education for its selfish gains. Hence, education being the constant, its utility depends on the nature of the mind. This is true of money as well.

A sacred mind prompts you to sacrifice: But a polluted mind makes you waste money by taking to vices. It makes you a slave to all sorts of bad habits. Ultimately you lose your good name. Here also money being constant, its utility depends on the mind. Therefore, it is necessary to keep your mind pure, sacred, Godward, and full of selfless divine love. This process is *sadhana*, spiritual endeavour. Body attachment, doubts, jealousy, hatred, ego, and selfishness pollute the mind, and lead one to the total ruin of life. Therefore, these evil tendencies must be got rid of forthwith and your mind must be filled with love instead. Thus, your education and money are well utilised. They would prompt you to undertake service activities enabling you ultimately to experience Divinity within yourself.

**Anil Kumar:** Swami! Our country, Bharat, is famous politically for its secular constitution. But, political parties interpret "secularism" in a variety of ways. Some offer distorted comments. I pray for your clarification.

**Bhagavan:** "Secularism" does not mean atheism. A secular nation is not the land of *Hiranayakasipu* (the demon who desisted all from thinking of God), but one where each citizen follows his *dharma*, propagates and professes it freely without criticising other people's faiths and *dharma*s under any circumstances. *Sanatana dharma* does refer to the "secular". Sri Krishna remarks: *Svadharme nidhanam s'reyah paradharmo bhayavahah*

In other words, you should follow *svadharma* and not *paradharma*. But, there is a subtle point here. *Svadharma* does not mean the *dharma*s relating to one's caste, stage in life, or profession, as you imagine. *Svadharma* is *Atmadharma*, the *dharma* based on Atma consciousness, and *paradharma* is *Anatmadharma* based on non-*atma* (devoid of the spirit) that is, which relates to body consciousness.

**Anil Kumar:** Swami! Today a number of international organisations are striving for peace. It looks as though the guiding principles of these organisations are not focused properly. How then is peace to be achieved?

**Bhagavan:** Their approach is defective. Where is peace? Peace is within you. You are the embodiment of peace. Peace is not to be found in the world outside. What lies outside is not peace, but pieces. First, achieve peace as an individual, then spread it in your family. Gradually you will enjoy peace in the community and then in the nation. Many countries stockpile atom bombs and other weapons of mass destruction, and ceaselessly go on chanting peace aphorisms. Is this peace?

**Anil Kumar:** Swami! In this modern age, many of us consider our age old religious rituals like *yajnas* and *yagas* meaningless, ridiculous and outdated. Why has this happened?

**Bhagavan:** Ignorance is the main cause, the utter ignorance of thoughtless speeches. A simple example: A District Collector went to a village on official work. There, in a field, he saw a farmer who was just throwing paddy grains on his plot of land. The official felt that this was the reason why India was so poor. "What a funny man is this rustic fellow throwing away paddy grains at a time when people are starving" he thought. He finally decided to ask the farmer why he was doing that. The farmer responded, "Sir, I am not wasting these paddy grains. Today it looks as though one bag of paddy is just thrown to the winds, but later you will get fifty bags of paddy out of this one bag". Then the Collector understood that he was mistaken.

Likewise, watching sacred rituals like *yajnas* and *yagas*, one might feel that *ghee* (clarified butter) and lots of other materials are wasted by being offered into the sacrificial fire. It is not so. The smoke that comes out of this fire as these materials are poured into the fire, and the Vedic mantras chanted simultaneously cleanse the polluted air. The whole atmosphere is purified. So, it is foolish to consider these rituals as outdated, ridiculous, and meaningless. They ensure timely rains and harvests. In fact, all these rituals prescribed by our Vedic texts are meant for the welfare of mankind and confer peace and bliss.

**Anil Kumar:** Swami! Kindly instruct us in the main principles to make progress in spheres such as Science, Politics, Ethics, Religion, and Spirituality.

**Bhagavan:** If you follow three main principles, all round progress is ensured. You will undoubtedly progress in all fields of activity, individual and collective.

The first principle is *daivapriti*, 'Love of God'. The second is *papabhati*, 'Fear of Sin'. The third is *sanghaniti*, 'Morality in Society'. Unless you love God immensely, you cannot fear sin. With fear of sin, morality gets automatically established in society. Thus, the three principles are interdependent and interrelated.

I often tell my students, "Before you do anything, just put this question to yourself: Will Swami approve this action? Is this going to please Swami?" Your intense love for Swami will not allow you to do anything wrong. Evidently, love of God leads to fear of sin. We find turbulent and raging waves in the sea dashing against boulders that stand steady and unshaken. In the same way your faith should be steady, strong, unshakeable, and unwavering, irrespective of losses, failures, defeats, troubles, difficulties, and problems. For instance, if anyone says to you, "There is no God," what reply should you give? You should reply in this way, "All right, you don't have your God, but what right do you have to deny my God?"

Never forget God, remember *pancaksari*, the five lettered mantra *devudunnadu* (1) de, (2) vu, (3 ) du, (4) nna, (5) du, (Telugu sentence with five letters meaning "God exists"). In order to see that you don't doubt this, repeat *astaksari*, the eight lettered Sanskrit mantra, *sams'ayatma vinas yati*, (1) sam, (2) s'a, 3) ya, (4) tma, (5) vi, 6) na, 7) s'ya, 8) ti which means 'doubt is death'. Never doubt God. In a sentence like this, "God is nowhere" reflects your pitiable plight of being denied His presence. Now, take out 'w' from the beginning of the fourth word 'where', and join it at the end of the third word 'no'. Then the sentence reads, 'God is now here'.

Man, most unfortunately, commits sins but is not prepared to face their consequences. He expects *punyam*, 'merit', the result of good actions, but does not refrain from doing *papam*, 'sin'. Nor would he do any meritorious deeds to get good results. Is there any logic or rationale for him to get good results? How foolish are such expectations? How do you expect one kind of result from an altogether different and opposite kind of action? Always bear in mind the whole thing comes back to you in the form of reaction, reflection, and resound. You cannot escape them. When you fully realise this, you will not commit sins or involve yourself in harmful deeds. So you should 'Love God' and 'Fear Sin'. With these two, there will be 'Morality in Society'.

(To be continued)

## CHINNA KATHA

### Is the Lord Greatest?

On one occasion, Narada went to Lord Narayana. In the course of their conversation, Narayana asked Narada, "You move around the three worlds, what news have you brought for Me from your wanderings? Have you seen anything great in My creation?"

"What can be greater than You in the three worlds!" replied Narada. On hearing this, Narayana said, "I am asking you about My creation and not about Myself."

Puzzled by the Lord's reply, Narada said, "I do not understand the question." Sensing Narada's confusion, Narayana then asked him, "There are the *Panchabhuuthas* (five basic elements). Which is the greatest among them?"

"The earth is the biggest", Narada replied. But not satisfied with the reply, Narayana asked, "But in the earth, is not three-fourths of the area occupied by water?"

On hearing this, Narada agreed that water was indeed greater than the earth. But Narayana observed, "But since all the water in the oceans was drunk by the sage Agasthya in one gulp, who do you think is greater, water or Agasthya?"

Narayana obviously had something in his mind. Narada had to but agree that Agasthya was greater. After all, the person who could drink all of the ocean's water in one gulp had to be greater than water! But Narayana had more in store. After Narada was convinced that Sage Agasthya was the greatest, Narayana quipped, "Agasthya is but a star in the sky. In the vast firmament, Agasthya is merely twinkling as a small star! Is not the firmament greater than the star then?"

Again, Narada had to agree with Narayana. He was now convinced that the firmament was greater than Agasthya. But Narayana obviously wanted to teach Narada something and did not stop with that. He then said, "In My *Avatar* as Vaamana I had covered the entire earth and sky with just one foot of Mine. So is the firmament greater or My foot?"

Narada replied, 'Your Foot, Lord. That is greater.' Narayana then asked, "If My foot itself is so great, am I not greater than My foot?" Narada was beginning to get the Lord's point. He nodded in agreement. Narayana then observed, "Although I am great, I am confined in the hearts of My devotees. So, dear Narada, My devotees are greater than Myself. And therefore, wherever My devotees sing My Name I am there".

- Baba



## **COVER STORY**

### **THE ZENITH OF HOLISTIC LEARNING**

#### **The Sublime Story of Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School, Prashanthi Nilayam, India, Part 1**

**Why this Cover Story? An Introduction.**

Since His early childhood, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's mission of spiritual awakening has been rooted in spiritual activism. He has devoted every second of His sacred physical presence on earth to uplift and inspire humanity through a silent spiritual revolution.

Apart from the stupendous Sri Sathya Sai Water Projects that are bringing clean water to millions in drought prone areas, the Sri Sathya Sai Medical Services that provide primary and tertiary care to millions of sick people free of cost, the one project that Bhagavan Baba has tirelessly devoted Himself to and personally overseen for the past four decades and more, is the reform in the field of education.

By redefining the true aim of education to be blossoming of the inner self and development of human character, Bhagavan Baba has rewritten the destiny of the entire human race, and its relationship to all other forms of life on the planet. Today, not only in contemporary India, but around the world, including at apex policy making bodies, the Sri Sathya Sai Education in Human Values is being recognized universally as the panacea for the ills of modern society, a perfect model that provides for an integrated development of human excellence.

Bhagavan Baba's life continues to impact millions who strive to live in the light of His teachings of Truth, Peace, Love, Right Conduct and Nonviolence. Yet, the extent of this Supreme Teacher's influence is most strikingly evident in the lives of the young men who attend His Higher Secondary School in Prashanthi Nilayam, India, a short walking distance from His residence, the Yajur Mandir.

Privileged to live out a curriculum designed by the source of all wisdom, God Himself, the students of the Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School, Prashanthi Nilayam enjoy a simple living, high thinking lifestyle in a peaceful, pure and nurturing environment, where, only the most sublime of human emotions are encouraged to blossom; where students are sensitized to seek eternal lessons in every detail of their seemingly mundane lives.

Recently, the Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School once again made headline news due to its stellar performance in the all-India level CBSE exams held nationwide for Grade X and XII students. Yet, the academic

**performance is only a tip of the iceberg that is the holistic system of Sri Sathya Sai Education, devoted to the development of the integrated personality of Sai students.**

**To offer our readers glimpses into a residential school system where the timeless values of character building are a way of life, this month's cover story comes as a 6 part series. Each section highlights some facet of this fascinating model of learning under the loving care and the watchful eyes of the Lord of the Universe.**

**This sacred seat of learning remains untainted because it involves no monetary transaction or exchange. For four decades, all Sai Education from kindergarten to Ph. D level is offered free of cost! Unthinkable as it sounds, thousands of students have graduated from the portals of the school which is essentially residential, contributing only a nominal sum for their hostel accommodation and food. No tuition fee has ever been charged!**

**To explore the generous source that supports and sustains this colossal project is as viable a proposition as an attempt to fathom every mystery of the cosmos. Yet, the Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School is an ideal case study of perfection and detail combined by the divine alchemist to create an ultimate recipe for human success.**

### **A SCHOOL THAT NOT ONLY EDUCATES, BUT ELEVATES! - The Unmatched Mission of SSSHSS**

It was the month of March – the busiest and most crucial period in the life of every student in the XII grade. It was going to be their second and last rendezvous with a public exam – a test which could make or mar their future forever. In India, for all English medium schools affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education of the Government of India, the nation-wide annual assessment conducted by this Board for the students of X and XII grade is like the Holy Grail. For the schools, it provides a one-time prospect to establish their credentials every year; and for the pupils, it is the opportunity of a lifetime - if they slip in this trial, it could be a burden which could bother them umpteen times as their lives unfold in the near future - their post secondary education depends upon the results of this performance. Every student, therefore, strengthens his/her heart and soul to do their best, and utilises every extra second available in the month of March to ensure that they make a mark for themselves. Parents and teachers everywhere virtually take charge of their wards completely – providing for all their material needs and comforts. Nobody wants to take a moment away from their teen during this time of the year.

### **Spontaneous Concern – A Common Sight in Sai School**

During the peak of this hectic and stressful period, the scene inside the Sri Sathya Sai Hostel for Junior Boys was as busy, but there was something strikingly different about it, especially in one corner of the hostel. Satish was

preparing intensely for his toughest subject, which was only a day or two away. That morning, however, to his surprise, he found his classmate, Ramesh, all-covered up and completely silent, lying on his bed; this was very unusual. He went near him and gently touched his hand. His heart sank. His fellow student and dormitory inmate was sick during this critical period! Extremely weak and running a temperature, Ramesh was in no position to study – his spirit was high, but flesh was frail. It was too much for Satish to stomach – how could he study when his own classmate was in such a helpless state? He immediately brought his condition to the notice of the concerned teacher, and soon Ramesh was administered the right medication. But his energy levels were still abysmal; he could not bring himself to sit and start studying. "I cannot let this happen," Satish said to himself; the predicament of Ramesh bothered him more than anything else. Even though he had a long way to go in his personal preparation for the most difficult exam, Satish sat by the bedside of Ramesh and read out all the chapters, questions and answers, explaining slowly and clearly till it registered in Ramesh's mind. It didn't matter if he was going to lose a few marks; at the most challenging moment of his roommate, he wanted to be there, all the way with him, and see to it that he too comes out with flying colours.

### **Brotherly Affection Binds Students**

If this was the poignant picture in one room of the hostel, in another room, on a different day, there was a dissimilar, but no less stirring, sight.

Before the boys proceed to the examination hall, they first assemble in the hostel Prayer Hall, offer special prayers, and are then served cookies and fruit juice. That day, it was Economics for the XII grade, the most challenging exam for Dinesh. So, while he joined the group prayer, he opted to skip the snacks and returned quickly for a last minute review. A few hurried seconds passed, and then he was completely taken by surprise. Someone had quietly placed the cookies next to his notes. He turned around instantaneously and found Vignesh silently walking away. Even in the rush and tension of such an important exam, his classmate had noticed what he thought nobody would ever know. Not only that, Vignesh did not even mind sparing those precious extra moments for his fellow student! It was too overwhelming; he ate the biscuits but focused his thoughts only on the examination paper, lest tears overpower him completely.

### **One United, Loving Family**

On another occasion, Naval Kishore, a student in grade VIII, who was not keeping well for sometime, fell ill like never before. His temperature shot up and he was in pain. It was past mid-night. Being helpless, he woke up one of his roommates. And the next instant, everybody was up in that room. Each one tried to do what he thought would help Naval Kishore – fanning him, giving him water, infusing strength through caring words, and so on. Each one, in his heart, was actually tensed and ready to do anything he could. One boy rushed to the teacher who occupied the adjacent room. A mild knock and the teacher opened the door. Very concerned, he asked, "What is the

problem?" The boy informed him about the sorry state of Naval. The teacher rushed in immediately. The next moment he was at the bedside of Naval, and sent one boy to fetch a particular medicine from his room. In the meanwhile, as he instilled courage into Naval with sweet words, the teacher started massaging his feet. In a culture where elders, especially the teachers are revered and respected, this spontaneous gesture of parental concern demonstrated by the teacher touched Naval's roommates deeply.

### **"Thou Shalt Speak the Truth, Tread the Path of Righteousness"**

One of them said, "Sir, let us do it. You do not have to do this." In fact, the sick boy himself was moved. "Sir, please, you don't have to press my feet." It stirred his heart because he felt he was only fifteen and here was his teacher aged over fifty serving him with such humility. But the teacher replied, "Will you ever tell your mother not to press your legs?" And continued, "I know at this moment you are missing your mother, but Bhagavan has kept me here to help you. I am sorry, I cannot give you a mother's love, but I will give you the best I can." And for the next hour or so, he sat by his bedside, showering him with his love, and diverting his mind through inspiring stories and consoling words. The boy was so overwhelmed that he almost forgot his pains, and finally slipped into sleep peacefully. It was 2 a.m. in the morning by then.

The story of Vighnesh R is another eye-opener. He completed his XII grade at the Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School in 2005 securing third place in academics, and joined a University pursuing his graduation in engineering in the state of Tamil Nadu. During the course of the curriculum, the professor graded and returned a particular test to the students, asking them if anyone needed any clarification. A few students went up to the lecturer requesting him to award more points in some answers where they thought they rightly deserved more. Rajesh too approached the faculty member in the staff room. Pointing to a particular answer, he said, "Sir, in this question, the maximum marks is 5, but I have been awarded 7. I think there surely is a mistake here." The lecturer was astounded. He stared at Rajesh with disbelief, and then turning to his colleague sitting beside him, said, "I have been in the teaching profession for the last 20 years, but never before did I come across a student like this!" He then asked Rajesh, "Where do you come from? Where did you do your schooling?" With great pride and fulfillment, Rajesh said, "Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School, Prasanthi Nilayam."

### **God Loving, Not God Fearing**

When an external examiner was on duty in this School to invigilate the CBSE exams, he was taken aback by the tension-free atmosphere that prevailed in the examination hall during such an important event. No student appeared perturbed or interested in malpractice! And the school staff too was very relaxed! It was completely a new experience to him. Very surprised, he looked at one student and rather sarcastically remarked, "Oh! All are God fearing in this school!" And almost instantaneously, the boy looked back and said, "No Sir, God loving!"

This tiny anecdote, along with the others preceding it, actually sum up the vision, vocation and the very purpose of the existence of this noble edifice of learning – the Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School, which offers completely free education to all its students and which is truly second to none! Because it is not an educational institution where you find tutors and students, you see here only brothers – some senior and others junior. While some may consider teachers to be mere instructors, here they play many vital roles. They are life-coaches, expert child psychologists, caring well-wishers, dedicated mentors and powerful role models infused with a missionary zeal and passion for good living and a Godly life ever reverberating in their sinews and veins. There are no students here, only 'gifts of God'. For, this is an institution founded by God Himself!

Mr. Habbu, the school's first principal emphatically states, "This is not an establishment of bricks and mortar, pupils and teachers; here every student is an institution by himself."

"Bhagavan says each one of you is a divine spark, and our aim in this school is to ensure that this tiny divine flame in each student flourishes into a forest fire," says Mr. Veda Narayan, who teaches Sanskrit. "Each one should shine with that divine effulgence, and we see this happen so beautifully every single day. Ordinary pieces, that once come in contact with the Divine Master, Bhagavan Baba, transform into masterpieces."

### **Blossoming of the Infinite Potential of Sai Students**

Quoting just one instance of the many, Dr. Shailesh Srivastava, who teaches physics, says, "There was a student who completed grade XII in our School, continued his graduation in Sri Sathya Sai University, and later went to a reputed university in the USA to pursue his post graduation in Management. A few months later, at a felicitation ceremony in that college where student talents are recognized and rewarded, he was adjudged the "Best Student" of the University. And you know why? Because he was multi-faceted and so meticulous. He excelled in basketball, was part of that Institute's band, spoke eloquently and was brilliant in academics too! The Principal of that college was very impressed and at the same time surprised. Next day, he called him to his room and asked, 'How did you manage to master everything?' The boy replied, 'Well, this was the way I was brought up. We did so many activities, as part of our routine everyday, in my school in Puttaparthi.'"

### **Nurturing the Head, the Hands and the Heart**

"To create such dynamic yet balanced personalities is the constant endeavour of this school," says Mr. Sivaramakrishnaiah, the current Principal of the School. "The school is a part of Bhagavan's grand mission. We have grown under His shade and our mission is to spread His message of Love. Swami says, 'A human being is composed of three elements – Head, Heart and the Hands.' Head here refers to intellect, Hands stand for service, and Heart represents the spirituality within. These three components are not only studied and talked about here, but also positively fostered and practiced. The net

result is that, the students learn to excel in Work, Worship and Wisdom. And therein lies the key to a dynamic and balanced personality. The daily schedule in the school and the hostel combined is designed by Bhagavan in such a way that these principles, consciously or unconsciously, get embedded in their being."

### **Joy & Love Fill the Air**

"When I stepped into this school in 2007, after having secured admission for the XI grade, my first experience was very touching," says Abhay Kini, who hails from Bangalore. "The XII grade boys met me right at the entrance and welcomed me heartfully. In fact, they didn't even let me carry the smallest piece of my luggage; not even my bucket! Then they joyfully escorted me to my room, showed me my cupboard, answered all my preliminary questions patiently, and before they left, said, 'Brother, have no worries. You are going to be happy here. We wish you all the best, and if you need help, do not hesitate to ask us.' I was clearly overwhelmed. Since it was a Sai School, I knew I was not going to face any form of ragging or hazing, but at the same time, I had never expected such a warm welcome!"

## **THE ZENITH OF HOLISTIC LEARNING**

### **Part 2**

#### **CURRICULUM DESIGNED TO TRAIN FUTURE TORCH BEARERS - A Typical Day in the Unique SSSHSS**

“When Swami asked me to take care of the boys in the Sri Sathya Sai Hostel, the only direction He gave me was: ‘Keep the boys happy and ensure that love prevails always’,” says Mr. Janardhan, the Warden of Sri Sathya Sai Junior Boys’ Hostel. “And this has been the guiding principle behind all the multifarious activities that are planned each day for the boys in the hostel.”

#### **Learning to Love God**

Illustrating the profound impact that this simple but sublime system has borne upon the young pupils, Mr. B. K. Misra, the English Teacher, says, “I once asked a very simple question to a boy. This young lad had completed his two years in the school and was about to join a professional course elsewhere. ‘Now that you are leaving School, can you tell me, Naresh, what have you learnt here?’ The boy did not even bat his eyelid and spontaneously said, ‘I have learnt to love God.’ I was stunned! I had never expected this from a boy who had barely two years of exposure to Swami and the system! That was the right answer! All the evil that we see in the world occurs because we have banished God from our lives. But he had learnt to love God! I felt, if he carried this love for God with him everywhere, then he would have achieved all that one needs to in life.”

#### **Prayer: The Manna for the Soul**

That is the magic of the Sai-suffused environment that pervades the hostel and the school completely. Love for God becomes every student's second nature. One aspect which contributes greatly to maintain and enhance this milieu is prayer. It is for this reason that life in the hostel begins and ends with a prayer. The day starts early morning at 5 a.m. when the boys assemble in the Prayer Hall for the morning prayer and *Suprabhatam*.

#### **Self-Discipline Springs Naturally in Sai Ambience**

Is it not difficult for the boys, especially those who are new to this disciplined way for life to get adjusted to such a schedule? “Well, before joining here, I always had this fear that I would not be able to get up early in the morning, because I had never done that earlier,” says Abhay Kini, and continues, “But once I came here, I do not know what happened, I was able to do it without any problems. And now, it comes to me spontaneously.”

## **Nurturing the Body, Mind and Soul**

After the morning prayer and an energy drink, the boys go out to the ground for jogging. This is followed by stretching exercises and the powerful *Surya Namaskar* or the 'Sun salutation' yoga-sequence. This allows the students to worship the Sun through a succession of 12 yogic postures and is considered as the best way to build up resistance against any malady in the body. Interestingly, it was Swami Himself who initiated this morning schedule. Mr. Habbu recalls, "After the Guru Poornima festival in July 1983, when a good number of students were down with viral fever, Swami was concerned and said that we must take steps to improve immunity in the boys. And that was the genesis of jogging and *Surya Namaskar*."

Once the stiffness of the body is gone, and the boys are active and agile, they shower and settle down for a sound breakfast. Soon, they are in the school, and now the mind has to be made still before the actual classes begin.

## **Sacred Chantings Prepare Mind for Learning**

This is achieved through the chanting of Vedic hymns in the school Prayer Hall. The whole school learns and recites the Vedas together. This activity too was personally initiated by Swami. One fine morning in June 1983, Swami sent Mr. Veda Narayan, who had just finished his Masters in Philosophy, to the school with the instruction: 'Go and teach Vedam to the students.' "For me, it was a dream come true," recalls Mr. Veda Narayan. "Because unlike elsewhere, where only a few are interested to learn these hymns, here the students were chanting Vedam en masse. This had never happened before. I was thrilled. The students here were fortunate to receive ancient learning and modern knowledge: Swami had blended it so beautifully."

Over the years, the impact this sacred initiative has had on the boys, and through them upon the world at large, is phenomenal and simply awesome. Mr. Keshav Harlalka, who passed out of the school in 1993 and currently is the Director of BHH Securities Pvt. Ltd, says, "I still chant the Vedic hymns I learnt at the school and they fill me with very strong energy." Echoing the same sentiment is Jeffrey, an American who completed his XII grade in the school just this year (2008). "I have always enjoyed chanting Vedam," he says and continues, "And I love it when we chant in front of Swami because I feel so much energy. Swami has always encouraged me to chant these hymns and is very happy when I do it perfectly with right intonations. Besides, this has given me a lot of confidence too. I know I can do anything if I put my mind into it."

It is with such attitude and mental alertness the boys finally enter their classrooms where they are taught the secular academic subjects, with generous doses of spirituality added in wherever appropriate and whenever necessary. Once the classes conclude in the afternoon, they rush to the hostel for a quick wash, and in orderly lines, proceed to the Mandir. Here begins their lessons for life, taught by the Divine Master in His own mysterious



way - sometimes vocally, at other times silently; sometimes directly and at other times subtly.

### **A Powerful Lesson – Straight from the Divine**

Sharing one such life lesson, Vijay S. Prasad, an alumnus, says, "I was then in my X grade when Swami came by my side. I rose with a pen in my hand and said, 'Swami, my exams are round the corner. Please bless me and this pen.'

"Swami then stared at me, and said, 'What? Only you have exams? What about your classmates? Don't they have tests too? It is wrong to pray only for yourself.'

"I immediately sensed the message and altered my prayer. 'Swami, please bless all my classmates. Let each one of us do well.' Swami was now all smiles. Very lovingly He blessed me and said, '*Bangaru* (golden one), that is the way you have to pray. Be selfless.' Not only this, next He waved His hand, produced Vibhuti, placed it on my palm, and before leaving, blessed the pen too."

That simple incident left a profound impact on the student's heart of the need to place the collective good before self-interest, for each of us is a part of a larger whole.

### **All Knowing Sai Encourages Positive Thinking**

Gauri Shrivastava, another alumnus who completed his grade XII in 2001, sharing his life-lesson from the Mandir sessions, says, "It was in 1999, I was in the X grade then. I had carried a few writing instruments to be blessed by Bhagavan along with my hall ticket to write the Board Exam. I also had a letter that I wanted to give Swami. When He came near me, I was lucky to get everything blessed. But suddenly I realized that I had forgotten to offer my letter. Just as this thought crossed my mind, Swami retraced His steps, removed the letter that was beneath my hall ticket and gently walked away without even saying a word. I was flabbergasted, to say the least. And then Swami asked us to sing songs. We sang, 'Mother of mine...' Swami was listening happily, but when the line 'Without Your love, where would I be...' was sung, He stopped us and said, 'Why do you think negative? Do not sing 'without your love...', sing 'with love...with love.' What a great lesson it was on positive thinking! I know that in every situation of my life, all I have to do is hold on to Him and look at the bright side of every situation."

### **Supreme Teacher Awakens Inner Wisdom**

The learning that happens in the Mandir is lasting and of immense importance in the life of every student. Students unanimously vouch that while knowledge is imparted in the school, it is in the Mandir that wisdom awakens in them. The net result is that they return spiritually charged to their hostel every

evening. They now have a little time to spend just by themselves or practice a new talent, before its time for the dinner bell.

Following a wholesome and healthy vegetarian dinner, at the stroke of 8 p.m., study hour begins, which continues till 9.50. They are then treated to a tasty night milk or an energy drink, and before the lights are off, all the boys sit together in their rooms and chant the night prayer. Thus ends every day in the hostel with the thoughts of God lingering in the students' minds as they slip into the lap of the Goddess of night.

## **THE ZENITH OF HOLISTIC LEARNING**

### **Part 3**

#### **'THE SCHOOL IS HIS MAKING' - When God Becomes Guru, Guardian and Guide**

"It was one of the best days in the nine years of my service as the Principal of Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School. The year was 1991," recalls Mr. Habbu, the first Principal of His School. "It was a beautiful evening in the month of May, and I was standing in front of Trayee Brindavan (Swami's residence in Bangalore) with the XII grade Board (CBSE) examinations results in my hand. I could not wait to offer the performance of the students at His lotus Feet. For the first time, the school had achieved 100 % first class – every student of the XII grade had not only passed, but also secured first division. There was joy dancing on my face as Swami opened the door, and I immediately presented the score card to Him. O my God! You should have seen Swami that evening! My joy was nothing compared to how jubilant and radiant Swami was!....Swami took that paper from my hand and holding it aloft, moved from one end of the compound to the other, and excitedly declared to over three hundred college students, elders and a few parents present there: 'See, My children from Prasanthi Nilayam have secured 100 % first class!' He was bliss personified, inside and outside. It was truly a sight for the Gods.

"This was the culmination of hard work of many years and Swami's Divine Grace. In fact, Swami had asked us to achieve this much earlier. But we missed it marginally for a couple of years. In 1986, because of an excellent effort by teachers and students, when we had 100 % pass results with 89 out of 96 students securing first class; I thought the School had done really well, Swami would be pleased. But His concern was about the 7 who didn't make it. 'Why did you allow four students in second class and three in third class?' He asked. The next year, much before the final exams, He said, 'Identify the students who are weak in academics and hold extra classes for them. Nobody should be left out.' That was His Love!"

#### **Leave No Child Behind: Baba**

Mr. Sivaramakrishnaiah, the current principal continues, "In fact, He asked us to appoint a senior student as a mentor for every weak student under the guidance of a teacher, and this has worked wonderfully. Now we choose mentors from the same class. The boys help each other and their performance has gone up. For Swami, a few students securing 98% or 99% is not a cause for celebration, His concern is for the last boy. That is how He has built this institution."

"The best part of our School is that we have rankers spending as much time helping those brothers who are weak as studying on their own," says Shivam Chopra, a student of the XII grade. "And if the second best student asks the

first ranker a doubt, he helps him whole heartedly; not for a moment does he think 'What if he gets an extra mark more than me'."

### **Promoting Camaraderie - All for One and One for All**

Narrating his own experience, Karthik, another student of the same class, says, "Last year, there was one classmate who used to get 60-70%. So I told him, 'Brother, you should devote more time to studies.' But he said, 'It is not that I do not give time, I just do not understand a few things.' Then I said, 'Feel free to ask me anytime you have a doubt. Never hesitate.' And so, in the next few weeks, I remember, he came to me many times. And when the next unit test was conducted, this boy got full marks in a question, in which I lost half a mark! But I was happy. It was a joy to see him excel...in fact, we are more overjoyed when our class average goes up rather than our own ranks." And then with a sweet smile on his face, Karthik continues, "The entire class gets chocolates; we celebrate together!"

### **Mastermind behind the Masterpiece**

This is the spirit that pervades in this sacred seat of learning, and you ask Mr. Habbu how did such an institution blossom and he categorically states, "This is all His making – a hundred percent!"

It was Swami who started the Sri Sathya Sai Junior College in 1979 which functioned in the premises of Eswaramma High School for a couple of years. Soon, Bhagavan had a new building constructed just beside this school, and in 1983, this edifice was ready for inauguration. Mr. Anjaiah, the then Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, was to open this building, and on that particular morning, the Lord was so eager to see His new school that when the Chief guest did not arrive in time, Swami bent down and went below the ribbon, inspected the rooms and left it to be opened formally by the Chief Minister later.

### **Selecting His Instruments of Choice**

"Since then He has been guiding us, holding our hands like a mother would do for her child," says the Principal Mr. Shivaramakrishnaiah. In fact, the story of how the Principal came into His fold is as fascinating as the story of the school itself. We have that interesting tale for you in the *Swami and Me* section of this issue. The story is no different in charm, though varied in content, if you look into the journey of every teacher who is part of this noble institution. They are all 'handpicked' by the Lord to work as His instruments in molding a novel and noble set of educated minds. But as the teachers say, "We do merely 1% of the job, Swami does 99%." And that is because there is no activity in the school that is not directly or indirectly directed by Swami. In fact, in the initial days, His physical involvement was so much that Swami used to be even part of the interview panel when new teachers were interviewed for recruitment.

"I still remember that day, it was August 4, 1979," recalls Mr. Rammohan Rao, who teaches English. "I was waiting to be called to take a sample class as part of the selection procedure. I wanted to take a little *vibhuti* and drink water before my turn came, but I could not find water, and therefore did not take the *vibhuti* as well. But imagine my surprise when I suddenly saw Swami there! He came straight to me, materialized *vibhuti*, put it in my palm and said to a person standing near by, 'Get water for him!' And after that when I took a lesson in the class, the Lord was sitting there for the full 15 minutes. The best part was reserved for the evening. Swami saw me in the *darshan* ground, came and stopped right in front of me, and said, 'Do you know what happened? You are selected!'"

### **Insightful Lessons from the Divine, Delivered Instantaneously**

Apart from interacting with teachers and students almost everyday in the Mandir, Swami made any number of visits to the school to enthuse and inspire the students. In the early years of the school, the boys organised a Science exhibition. Swami was fascinated with the models and interacted leisurely with each student. At the same time, drove into them precious lessons. There was a model named "Burglar's alarm". The moment one put his hand in front of that instrument, the alarm went off. The boys requested Swami to place His hand too. The sweet Lord kindly did, but no siren went off! The boys, in a panic, tested their instrument; it was fine. They pleaded with Him again, and He obliged for the second time! But the scene was no different. The boys were now confused and crestfallen. And then, with a mischievous smile on His face, the Lord revealed, "I am not this kind of a thief, I am *Chittachora* (stealer of hearts)!"

### **Grateful Alumni Return to Serve**

Every time the boys had Swami in the school or the hostel, it was a fascinating experience. In the subsequent years, the students staged a Photo Exhibition followed by a Human Values Exhibition in 1988. The latter continued as an annual offering of students for more than 6 years. The joy that Swami conferred upon the students during these occasions was something out of the ordinary. Going down memory lane, Mr. S. Sathya, who was a student then and is now a teacher at the school, says, "In one of the stalls at the exhibition, we had a game of darts. When Bhagavan came there, He goaded everyone around to try their luck. Many elders and teachers gave it a shot, some very successful in actually hitting the wall on which the dart-board was hung! Finally, it was Bhagavan's turn. Believe me, He was the only one to hit the bulls eye in the very first attempt!..

"To say that my stay at the school as a student was eventful is not only to state the obvious but also is an understatement. To join as a teacher here is not only a blessing undisguised but also a vent for gratitude. **Here, I have learnt much more than I have been taught. Now, I only pray to Bhagavan so that I may teach much more than what I have learnt...and continue to learn as I teach!**"

## **Unparalleled Love of Sai for His Students**

That is how the Lord has created gems out of seemingly ordinary stones. "Swami says 'students are My property', and the way He takes care of them is mysterious and moving," says the current Principal. "He knows every boy much more than any of us in the school or in the hostel. On one occasion when I was mentioning to Swami about a particular boy, even before I could say anything, He said, 'Oh, that boy is from Bombay, right? I know him. He lives near Andheri. His father is a doctor.' I was dumbstuck; I had never seen Swami talking to him!"

"Once I had gone to Swami's residence to give a letter about a sick boy," narrates Dr. Shailesh Srivastava. "Even before I could send the letter, Swami suddenly called me in and started talking about this sick boy! I had not opened my mouth at all. The next moment, He created capsules, but was searching for paper(!). Finally, He found a small piece near the window. He packed the capsules neatly, and placing them in my hands said, 'Tell the boy not to worry. Swami's love is always there.'"

Instances like this are galore. Ask any student and a string of stories will roll out. "The strength of this school is this direct guidance and personal love of Swami. It is undoubtedly His grace and nothing else that has made the school what it is today," says P. Satya Narayam, an alumnus currently working in Kuwait as a Credit Analyst in the Commercial Bank of Kuwait.

## **Inexhaustible Love for His Students**

Years have rolled by, many batches of students have graduated from the school, and many institutions have sprouted in Prasanthi Nilayam, but Swami's love and concern for His school has not waned a bit. "He has provided us whatever we need – from pins to tables, fans to furniture -, at times even before asking," says the Principal. "In 1994, a cyclostyle machine (a copier used prior to photocopiers) became necessary and when I presented this request to Him, Swami took me to a store in the Poorna Chandra Auditorium. Among various things lying there, was a box. Swami said, 'You take this box, this will serve the purpose'. Later, when we opened the packet, we found that it was a computer printer! At that time, we had no computer in the school. So, next year (1995) I asked for computers and Swami sent two computers along with table, chairs, et al. When I sought His permission to create a separate Air Conditioned (AC) room for these computers, the kind Lord sent His own AC that He had used in the Mandir. That was the extent of Swami's concern."

## **Early Exposure to Computer Studies**

"But the most wonderful part is that it was in the year 1996 the Central Board of Secondary Education or CBSE introduced a curriculum strand on Computer Science with C++," says Mr. Venkateswar Prusty, who teaches the subject. "When the Principal informed Swami of this development, Swami sent a Pentium to the school – at that time (in 1996) nobody in Puttaparthi had seen

a Pentium machine, not even the University students. Today, the computer lab is an immaculate and well-furnished state-of-the-art facility with 15 machines – one allotted for each boy studying this subject.”

But the most heartening aspect for these boys is that every year when they take their projects to the Mandir for His blessings, Swami invariably spends ample time with each boy looking through his work carefully. “What happened last year (2007) is even more amazing,” shares Mr. Prusty. “The *bhajans* concluded that evening, Swami took *arathi* and got into the car – well almost! Suddenly, He asked for His chair to be brought out, and to everybody’s surprise came and settled on the stage, in front of the boys. That day all the Computer Science boys were in the front, ready with their projects. He called each one of them, spent a couple of minutes browsing through their offering, and finally called me and blessed me profusely. It was such a memorable day!

“By His grace, all these boys have done exceedingly well in the Board exams, year after year. In fact, the intensive project work that they undertake completely independently while at His school has always been a great highlight on their curriculum vitae.”

### **Academic Excellence Draws Attention of Policy Makers**

Not only this, the academic record of the school in the last decade has been so impressive that it has repeatedly attracted the attention of premier high school educational bodies of the Government of India. In 2003, the Ministry of Education, Government of India, awarded the Best Teacher Award to the Principal of the School in a grand function in New Delhi. This was repeated again in 2005, with the award this time going to Mr. Veda Narayan, the Sanskrit Teacher. For the last five years, the School has been achieving 95% distinction (most of the students securing above 75%) apart from 100% first class in grade XII. Among them, one of every 4 has garnered over 90% marks. Five students secured a perfect 100% in Sanskrit in the current year (2008), and in the previous year, one student hit the bull’s eye in Accounting, scoring full marks there. In the year before that, it was in Bio-Sciences. Therefore, every year when the CBSE results are announced, the school is in a celebration mood, not because of the excellent performance of the students, but the joy that lights up Bhagavan’s face when He sees His children’s commendable effort and gleefully announces it to the whole audience gathered for His *darshan*.

### **Academic Achievement Only a Part of the Big Picture**

“These achievements are laudable, but this is not what the school stands for,” alerts Dr. Shailesh Srivastava, the Physics teacher. “One should note that the students in this school achieve such excellent academic results with only two hours of compulsory study time every night. This is true even for those in the X and XII grade too. I once heard an external examiner saying, ‘I wonder how these boys produce such good results with only two hours of study everyday! Maybe, in those two hours, they really study and absorb a lot.’”

### **Disciplined Life Promotes Intense Concentration**

Shivam, a student of XII grade, answers this beautifully. "We do more of intensive study than extensive study," he says with a smile and explains, "Our schedule is planned in such a way that we have time for everything. It is something like a switch going off and on. When we are on the ground, we play vigorously, but when it comes to study hours, we concentrate completely. If we do not do that, we know we will not find that much time again. In the beginning, due to mental inertia, we may not be able to shift our focus from one activity to another instantaneously, but with time, the system just gets into you. Your concentration levels just go up."

"When I was studying in Bangalore, during my X grade I used to take 6 hours a day to complete my homework," says Abhay, now in XII. "But in Swami's school, I am able to do more in half the time. In fact, this is something wonderful that the system has given me."

### **Absence of Distractions Conducive to Mental Focus**

"Another factor which helps us a lot is that in the hostel we have absolutely no distractions," says Shastri, another student in the XII grade. "Moreover, during *darshan* sessions whenever Swami sits outside, we sit erect and look at Swami with one-pointed attention for 30-45 minutes and sometimes even longer. This increases our concentration span and sharpens our mind."

### **Mind Control Confers Infinite Learning Potentiality**

"A man with a controlled mind can achieve wonders in this world. This institution set up by Swami stands as a live testimony to this fact," asserts Dr. Srivastava. "A student can achieve 100 % if he studies only two hours per day, provided he has a disciplined mind. This is very important because secular learning is only 'education to earn a living', the other most significant part is 'education for life' which is essentially 'character building', and it is towards this end that the maximum time and effort of the students has to be directed. It is for this reason that the daily routine of the boys from 5 am till 10 pm is chock-a-block with ennobling activities, one after another."

"Multi-tasking has become very easy for me in my corporate life," says Achintya, an alumnus of the school working currently in Genpact Ltd, Signapore. "There is so much discipline in my life and I can adapt and adjust to uncomfortable situations with greater ease than any of my peers. My stay in Swami's hostel has instilled in me a lot of self-confidence."

### **Integrated Personality Development**

"The world over, education is focused only on developing the mind," says Mr. B. K. Misra, the English teacher. "But man is not just a body of intellect, he has emotions and feelings, and more importantly, awareness, which is based on the soul. Swami's school endeavours to develop this whole personality of an individual. This is the most beautiful aspect – while there is development of



the body and the mind, there is also enrichment of the heart and the soul, of emotions and compassion. Therefore, what you see as a product is an integrated personality that humanity needs now more than ever."

Citing a small instance, Mr. Misra says, "One day I was sitting in the Mandir verandah cross-legged on the ground, and writing something. I didn't have a writing pad or board, therefore, the paper was on my knee. Even though it was difficult, I continued to write with my head down. One boy who was sitting a few yards away from me (in the third block) noticed this, quietly came over, placed a board on my knee, and walked back deftly. When I looked up, he was already seated; so I really didn't know who it was. Nobody had told him; I hadn't asked for it! The most striking aspect is that he didn't even want to be recognized for it! It is this sense of awareness, to feel for the other and respond spontaneously and whole-heartedly, which is special in the students of this school. And this, I believe, is truly His making. His Love does wonders, and every brick and stone, pupil and teacher in this school can vouch for it."

## **THE ZENITH OF HOLISTIC LEARNING**

### **Part 4**

#### **HONING TALENTS TO OFFER IT AS HOMAGE - The Multifarious Extra Curricular Activities Promote Multiple Intelligences**

Take the daily schedule of a typical X or XII grader of any school in India affiliated to the CBSE, which conducts nation-wide examinations for students of these grades. Their routine is a tough rigmarole of classes, tuitions, homework, and more studies. This is because the importance of the results of these examinations can never be over-estimated. Good marks in these competitive tests could be the first step to a glorious career.

The schedule of the boys in these grades in the Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School, is equally tight, the only difference being academics takes only two hours of their daily routine outside of the classroom instructions during school hours. At the same time, their board examinations results are far superior than any average school. [See Part-3 of this Cover Story] A large proportion of the boys' time in this school is spent in a multitude of extra-curricular activities. This is because the focus of the school is not to create excellent careers for their students, but to hone their talents, and transmute the boys into balanced and inspired individuals who will love to live for a higher ideal in life.

#### **Integrated Education**

One of the important events in the school's calendar is the Annual Sports Meet, which is held on January 11 every year. This is an occasion when, in front of Swami and a large international audience, the students display a scintillating variety of programmes which calls for extraordinary dexterity of the mind and the body. The items include mind-boggling gymnastics to vigorous aerobics, thrilling martial arts, complex *yogasanas*, dare-devil bike-stunts and so on. But the most amazing feature about this whole endeavour is that everything is decided and rehearsed to perfection in a span of less than four weeks.

#### **Unity of Purpose Leads to Astounding Results**

Sourav Kumar, a student in grade XII, says, "In 2007, we had a trainer who had coached participants of the Afro-Asian games. He taught us martial arts stunts, and at the end of the programme he revealed: 'Dear boys, I cannot believe what has happened here. What requires nine months to train participants elsewhere, happened here in one just month! I am still baffled. Maybe it is because of Swami's grace.'"

This sense of awe and amazement seems to be a common experience of every outsider who interacts with the students of this school. "Apart from an agile body, and the students' disciplined minds, the secret of this success lies

in the unity of purpose," explains Mr. Venkateswarlu, who teaches Mathematics at the school. "Everybody works with the sole intention of pleasing Swami and is ready to work as hard as it takes to achieve this goal. When such pure determination and devotion is present in ample measure, miracles are bound to happen," he explains.

"Coming from Bangalore, a metropolitan city, and not used to demanding physical work, when I found myself in the group doing martial arts, I thought I will not be able to take it at all," recalls Abhay Kini, a student of grade XII. "In the beginning, it was strenuous, but our teachers were there to guide and take care of us every step of the way. After a few days, it just became a part of my schedule. I was more active than ever. It was a wonderful experience."

"But the best part of Sportsmeet is that all the 1500 students are involved in one item or the other, and each one is giving it his all to see that smile on Bhagavan's face," says Shivam Chopra, grade XII.

"Swami is always particular that every student participates in one event or the other," explains Mr. Venkateswarlu and continues, "Even when He used to come to distribute prizes to the boys after the Sports Meet, He used to express great happiness if every student was a recipient of some prize or the other."

### **TEAMS – Together Everyone Achieves More with Sai**

Manoj G. Praharsh, currently a student enrolled in the Management program at the Sri Sathya Sai University, recalls his Sports Meet experience when he was in the school, "We had practiced for an event for three weeks, and now with exactly 4 days left for the Big Day on January 11 came the news that for certain reasons, our programme had to be changed. We were a group of more than 100 boys. This unexpected predicament was too much for us to handle. It was a very testing time; nevertheless, a few senior brothers belonging to grade XII of our group immediately sat together, discussed, and chalked out an alternative. But we just had only three and half days at our disposal; so, we all sat and prayed together. Later in the day, the senior brothers shared their idea. They conveniently broke the large group into three small groups of gymnastics, break dance and aerobics, and utilised each one's core-competence suitably. You may not believe, on January 11, the final presentation was a scintillating performance! In less than 4 days we had achieved what would otherwise have taken us 20-25 days. Swami's grace was of course there, at the same time, it demonstrated to us the power of a focused mind and a selfless goal-oriented effort. Somebody, at that time, shared with me an expansion of the word TEAMS - **T**ogether **E**veryone **A**chieves **M**ore with **S**ai. I think it explains the whole idea beautifully."

### **Love: A Course in Miracles**

The magic of this team spirit is evident in the Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School, in a number of activities, all round the year. "Another striking example is the celebration of Ganesh Chaturthi. On the day of the

ceremonial immersion of the idol of Lord Ganesha every year, we make huge and impressive chariots and palanquins to carry the idol in a grand procession to the sacred presence of Bhagavan,” says Sourav of grade XII. Describing what happened last year (2007) during this event, his classmate, Shivam, says, “The theme of our chariot was a tall and colorful garden. But we had only one day to create this structure, because we had to decorate the hostel too. We just had three or four rods which were not even welded together, and the next day the entire structure was supposed to be presented in front of Swami! With a cool head, we listed the jobs, divided it among ourselves and went about the work with single-minded devotion. Twenty four hours later, from nothing rose a charming construction. We were ourselves stunned. We were prepared to do anything to see a smile blossom on His face.”

Unlike the two-day chariot-making during Ganesh Chaturthi, one mega operation which goes on for nearly two weeks every year is the Grama Seva. “It is such a wonderful opportunity for the boys to go to the villages and see the living conditions in the rural areas,” says Mr. Venkateswarlu. “For many students coming from the cities and towns, this service activity, which involves lovingly distributing food packets and clothes to the poor and underprivileged, is a revelation.”

### **Grama Seva Offers a Whole New Perspective**

“I had never been to a village before,” says Shivam Chopra of grade XII. “During the onward journey I was complaining because it was a tedious trip with bumps and jumps every now and then. But after I saw the humble living conditions of the rural people and their simple lifestyle, believe me, the return journey suddenly became more comfortable.” “But the most touching aspect,” adds his classmate, Abhay Kini, “was how the villagers welcomed us as if each one of us was Swami Himself. They were so beholden to us when we gave them food packets and clothes. For me, it was a deeply moving experience to come face to face with the harsh realities of life in rural India and to experience the joy to loving service.”

Mr. Venkateswarlu, the Mathematics teacher who is deeply involved every year in organizing this activity, says, “Often, I have heard boys come to me after the programme and say, ‘Sir, once I start earning money, I am surely going to do something for such people, even if not in a scale as mammoth as this.’”

Keshav, an alumnus of the school working as Director of BHH securities, says, “The few years of stay in the school has instilled in me a very strong value of service. I never lose an opportunity to go out of my way if I can make a difference and make somebody's life better. Almost every alumnus of the school who is now financially independent, is engaged in some service activity or the other – big or small, individually, or as a part of a group,” states Mr. Venkateswarlu. “I know of a boy, Shantanu, who had adopted two children of his neighbourhood; there is another who freely coaches poor students who cannot afford to pay for tuitions; the third visits an orphanage and spends a minimum of half an hour every week day, except Sundays when he spends

the whole day there; the fourth, who is now a doctor, is a regular participant in free medical camps organized by the Sai organization; and so it goes, on and on. The list is endless. The impact of Grama Seva on the boys' psyche is much more than that meets the eye."

### **Holy, Holistic Education, KG to PG Offered Absolutely Free**

As all Sai Education programs, from KG to PG or starting from elementary school all the way to university level are offered absolutely free of cost by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba to thousands of students each year, generations of families today are deeply indebted to Bhagavan for His divine magnanimity. Grama Seva offers them the perfect impetus to express their gratitude for His love and generosity by making selfless service an integral part of their lives even after they leave the sacred school and pursue professional vocations in any part of the world.

### **Fine Arts Draw Out Inner Creativity**

If the Grama Seva is a one-time mammoth service project every year teaching students valuable lessons of life, another activity which keeps the boys busy all round the year is music and drama. They get umpteen opportunities to present their creative talents before Bhagavan, and every time it is a great chance and an even greater learning experience. Mr. Rammohan Rao from the English department of the school, who has been the guiding force behind such programmes, sharing just one of his experiences, says, "It was the month of March in 2005. The examinations were on. Earlier the boys had practiced one drama but never got an opportunity to perform before Bhagavan. The academic year was now coming to a close, and I thought, in a few days all boys will be gone and they will miss this chance forever. I was very concerned, so I prayed to Bhagavan, and encouraged the boys to practice what is called 'visual meditation'.

### **Actualizing A Dream Vision**

"At the time of night prayer, we would all sit together and visualize... that Bhagavan is actually seeing the drama in the Sai Kulwant Hall...He is rewarding the boy who played the role of Shirdi Baba...He is so full of joy...everyone is so happy... and so on. In spite of examinations, the boys practiced whenever they had a little spare time. We prayed day after day, for weeks, and finally Bhagavan did respond! On March 29, on the last day of the examination, the boys staged the drama!

"And it unfolded exactly how we had meditated! Swami was so happy watching the drama and at the end blessed the boy who played the role of Shirdi Baba with a chain! The power of prayer is unimaginable. We are entities of body, mind and spirit, but spirit is the greatest! The boys had learnt a lesson which could be their perennial source of strength in the face of any adversity."

## No Detail Insignificant For the Divine Teacher

Such invaluable lessons of life can be learnt only at the Lotus Feet of a Divine Master. And every time they got such an opportunity, the take-home for every student after the event was precious. Narrating what happened this year (2008), Krishna Sastri of grade XII says, "There was a drama on Mira bai, and this was to be staged in the month of March. Before the presentation began, we assembled in the Bhajan Hall, and soon after *darshan*, Swami came inside. I was playing the role of Mira and was therefore draped in a pink sari. Bhagavan looked at me and asked, 'Are you not going to change into white sari?' I said, 'Yes, Swami, after the fifth scene.' Swami then asked, 'Will the time be sufficient to change?' 'Yes, Swami,' I replied as it usually takes 5-6 minutes to change the sari. But He asked the same question again. 'Yes, Swami,' I replied again. The same thing happened for the third time! And I returned the same answer. Finally, Swami said, 'Ok! I will see.' And as the drama proceeded, exactly after my fifth scene, Swami suddenly returned to the interview room! And I had enough time to change my costume. The moment I was ready, Swami was back on the stage. I instantly remembered His words, 'I will see.' What a priceless lesson it taught me! I know for sure that Swami is omniscient. Though at times He may pretend as if He knows nothing, He is actually aware of everything at all times."

Such has been the impact of various extra curricular activities that fill the students' calendar in this school. People, who stay in Puttaparthi and have seen the school boys in action, know this is not even tip of the iceberg. Because there is so much that happens everyday. There are friendly matches in all outdoor games – cricket, football, basketball, volleyball, shuttle badminton, and so on, right from the start of the academic year. Later, all the boys are divided into five houses and inter-house competitions begin which go on all through the year.

## Creative Avenues Abound in the Curriculum

"There is ample opportunity for the students to explore their creativity," says Mr. Venkateswar Prusty, the Computer Science teacher who oversees this area of learning. "Here, the boys produce lovely short videos for different occasions. On Teachers' Day, it is about gratitude to teachers; on Farewell Day, a token of love to every senior brother; and on the Hostel Anniversary Day, it is on their 'Home Sweet Home'."

"Every Saturday in the school we hold the Talent Search Programme (TSP) wherein we have an assortment of competitions," says Mr. Sai Surendranath, who teaches Commerce and coordinates TSP in the school. The opportunities range from elocution and 'pick and speak' to mono-acting, staging skits, essay writing, composing poems, model making, *bhajan antakshari*, thermo-coal modeling, charades, dance, music, painting, sketching, vedam chanting – individual, pair and group, to a variety of quizzes. Other than this, there is plenty of action going on on the sports field.

## **Self-Confidence - the Stepping Stone to Excellence**

"Over the years I have seen boys who used to fumble while speaking blossom into excellent orators; those who used to fiddle around with the *tabla* become excellent percussionists playing in front of Bhagavan; others who were scared to stand and talk, play leading roles in the Convocation drama of the University; and so on.

"I always had stage fear. I couldn't stand in front of an audience," says Karthik of grade XII. "But when I was in grade VIII, I was given the tiny role of attendant in a skit – all I had to do was enter the stage, put a file on the table and disappear. I did this part again and again during the practice sessions, and my brothers encouraged me a lot. Slowly, I started becoming confident and with time, I lost all fear of the stage. Now, I can face the audience any day."

Another XII grader, Shivam Chopra, says, "I never knew I could write poems. My TSP captain, who was a senior brother, goaded and guided me to write, and I did very well for my house. Later, I had the opportunity even to present my poem in front of Swami!"

Mr. Sai Surendranath cites another instance and says, "I remember there was a student in the XI grade who used to sing, only when he was alone in his room. He had a lovely voice, but would never sing if anybody was around. I encouraged him to come out of his shell many times, but I never had any impact on him. Finally, one day Swami was to come to the hostel. I called this boy, gave him a cassette and said, 'There is a beautiful song in this tape which will suit your voice. Please learn this song. Swami is likely to come to the hostel tomorrow. If you practice, you could sing this song when Swami is sitting on the swing in the hostel quadrangle. It is a great opportunity. If you feel you are not confident, we can cancel even in the last moment. So, there is no need to worry. Just give it a try.' Swami did come and He enjoyed the boy's performance so much that He asked him to start singing *bhajans* in the Mandir next day itself! And today he is a professional vocalist."

## **Behind All Achievement – One Inspiration**

"If there is one person to whom all the credit should go for the blossoming of students' personalities in this school, it is Bhagavan Baba alone," asserts Mr. Sai Surendranath, and explains, "It is because, though on the physical plane He is the Founder of this School, He brings Himself down to the level of a seemingly substandard school student. He is personally concerned about every aspect of their welfare – health to academics, family problems to financial constraints. I remember, in the earlier days, He used to suddenly drop in during practice sessions of Christmas carols and spend a lot of time guiding, encouraging and smiling with the students. Touched by His charismatic Love, each one of these buds have blossomed into great actors, good singers, expert sportsmen and so on. And it is also for this reason that they find fulfillment in their lives only when they offer these talents, which they

regard as His gifts, back to Him in whatever way they can, whether they are here or elsewhere.”



## **THE ZENITH OF HOLISTIC LEARNING**

### **Part 5**

#### **A HOME FOR ENLIGHTENED LIVING - The Sri Sathya Sai Junior Boys' Hostel**

"Tears roll down my cheeks when I think of the days I spent in Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School," says Mr. S. Ramakrishnan, who is currently as a Senior Research Analyst in Forst & Sullivan. He adds, "The unique facet of the school is the teacher-pupil relationship reminiscent of the 'Gurukula' system prevalent in ancient India. But what is more important, and is the main strength of the school, is the one-of-its-kind hostel life. I have learnt some of life's greatest principles living with other boys in this hostel."

#### **Celebrating Diversity**

Dr. Shailesh Srivastava, the physics teacher who stays in the hostel along with the boys, says, "In this hostel students come from different parts of India and abroad, with different backgrounds and cultures, live under the same roof and in the same dormitory. There are at least 6 boys in every room, and they learn to appreciate each other's likes and dislikes, and adjust accordingly."

"In my room there are boys from different states of India – Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal - with very varied tastes and habits. It is not that we do not have differences; we live in harmony in spite of several views and attitudes. And there are boys belonging to different faiths too," says Abhay, grade XII, who hails from Bangalore.

#### **Encouraging Personal Faith**

Narrating his personal experience, Mohammad Faizuddin from Karnataka, now in grade XII, says, "All my roommates are so kind and co-operative. Whenever I sit down to perform Nammaz during the day, the room suddenly becomes silent. And all the teachers too encourage me to offer daily prayers and observe fasting during the holy month of Ramzan. During this period, I was very particular about doing Roza (fasting), and since one has to partake food before sunrise, on the first day of Ramzan, I preserved a little from the previous night's dinner in my cupboard for the next morning breakfast. When Mr. Satheesh Babu, my hostel teacher, came to know of this, from the next day onwards he arranged fresh breakfast for me before 5 am itself! I feel blessed to be studying in such an environment. In fact, when one of the teachers became aware of the poor financial status of my parents, who were unable to pay the minimum hostel fees, he told me not to worry. My dues were paid. Staying in this hostel is, truly, for me, a dream come true."

#### **Hostel - An Oasis of Mutual Consideration and Concern**

"Our hostel is all about senior-junior brotherhood," says Shivam Chopra of grade XII and explains, "When we step into the hostel for the first time in

grade VIII, the XII graders lovingly welcome us and carry our luggage to our rooms. If you accidentally dash against a senior in the corridor, 'sorry brother' comes spontaneously first from the senior."

Illustrating this heart-warming environment of the hostel, Mr. Satheesh Babu, the hostel teacher, says, "Food is served in the hostel in a buffet fashion, where each one collects his food from the counter, and there are always a few boys serving. One evening, I was standing in the queue just like other boys, and noticed that one boy, Vinay, came to the counter for the second time because he liked a particular dish. But the boy at the counter could not oblige him as there was still a long queue and there was just enough for everybody. Prakash, the boy standing in front of me, noticed this. When his turn came, he took his share, and then quietly went near Vinay, and placed his share of the dish in Vinay's plate. He immediately looked up in protest. Prakash, then very gently, said to Vinay, 'Frankly, I do not like this dish. Please have it.' When I saw this I knew that there is surely more to this story, and therefore, later, I called Prakash and asked, 'Why did you tell a lie?' He said, 'Unless I did that, I knew Vinay would not accept my share. Truly, I am more satisfied and happy seeing him happy than having the special dish.' And believe me, I see such instances umpteen times every single day. In fact, in this hostel, it would be quite a task to find situations where one boy is not willing to help the other!"

### **Each Lives for the Other and All Live for God**

Mr. Janardhan, the Warden of Sri Sathya Sai Junior Boys Hostel, says, "Our only objective is to inculcate love in the hearts of boys. Ours is a small world where each lives for the other and all live for God. This is our motto. We take care of every single need of the boys inside the hostel premises itself; they do not have to go outside for anything, whatsoever. In fact, the hostel is actually run by the boys themselves, we only guide them."

### **Coop Living on Residence Instills Independence**

As the school is strictly residential and the hostel is almost like their home, there is no activity of their 'home' in which the boys are not involved right from maintaining cleanliness of their rooms and cupboards to running the hostel kitchen, dispensary, stores, sick-ward, reading room, library and so on.

"I had never before touched a broom," says Abhay Kini, who joined in 2007 as a student in grade XI. "But now I have learnt to sweep and I do not mind it at all. In fact, in my room, everybody volunteers to handle the broom. It is not an activity to be looked down upon. It has taught me that every task is sacred and important in its own way."

### **Handy Skills - Part of Hostel Routine**

"A few years ago, one of our students was traveling in a bus from Chennai to Puttaparthi," says Mr. Venkateswarlu. "On the way, the bus met with a minor accident. Nobody was hurt but the headlights of the vehicle would not work. And it was in the middle of the night. The bus driver, understandably, refused

to drive further. The passengers requested him to move slowly, but he would not relent. Then, our student who was also around, requested the driver for the toolkit. The next moment, he was trying to fix the headlights and he successfully accomplished it! The passengers were happy, while the driver was taken aback. He said him, 'Do you work in some kind of a mechanic shop?' The boy said, 'No. I am student in Swami's hostel. We are taught many skills. I work in the maintenance department of the hostel.'

### **Living in Swami's Hostel - A Course in Management**

Mr. T. M. Gopikrishna, a school alumnus currently working as a Divisional Head in Saint Gobain Glass India Ltd., says, "My involvement in various self-help activities during my stay at Swami's hostel has developed in me a do-it-yourself attitude. Though I am a non-MBA, I have never felt inadequate in managing small business divisions largely because management is all about initiative, responsibility and participation – and all these traits unconsciously became a part of my personality by just living in Swami's hostel."

### **Hostel - A Mini World, Ideal Training Ground for Life**

Just like the maintenance department, the Hostel dispensary is another section where many boys work enthusiastically. "These boys are trained and are ready to render service at any time of the day," says Mr. Satheesh Babu. "They know how to professionally clean injuries and dress wounds. They can read temperature and blood pressure, and can identify whether a particular drug is an antibiotic or an analgesic, antipyretic or anti-inflammatory. However, they always function under the direct and complete guidance of the hostel doctor."

Sastry of grade XII, who works in this department, says, "For me, to work in the hostel dispensary is a dream come true. I always wanted to become a doctor and this work fills me with great satisfaction. The joy I see on my brothers' faces when I dress their wounds or clarify their doubts on drug usage or dosage, or accompany them to Swami's hospitals whenever there is a need, is my greatest reward."

Working closely with the hostel dispensary is the hostel sick-ward which the boys call "Delightful Dietary Services" - and for good reason. The boys working in this department share joy and love with the ones who need it the most in the hostel in a wonderful fashion. They have the opportunity to serve the sick. They go everyday to the boys who are unwell, and after enquiring about their welfare, prepare tailor-made special dishes for them. Be it breakfast, lunch, snacks or dinner, they are always eager to cheer up the ailing ones. They joyfully present the food attractively and inspiring messages, and serve their sick brothers personally with a smiling face.

### **The Irrepressible Urge to Serve**

Mr. Satheesh Babu who supervises this department, says, "I am shocked to see how boys from grade VIII to XII long to sacrifice whatever little spare time

they have for others when they could have played or just relaxed. The other day when the new academic year began (in 2008), one boy, who was part of this service department when he was in grade X the previous year, came to me with the request to allow him to continue in this department. As he was not a very bright student academically, I told him, 'You are now in XI grade and selected for the group MPC (Maths, Physics and Chemistry). You will now need a lot more time for your studies. So, I cannot permit you to spend time in this department. Use your time and study well.' But the boy was insistent. 'Sir, I want to serve, please.' To tactically dissuade him, I said, 'I cannot allow you unless you have permission from other teachers.' The boy returned within minutes having obtained their consent. As a last try, I said, 'Unless your parents are happy about this, I cannot allow you.' The next day, I received a call from his father who said, 'Please give him chance to work in the sick-ward; he has learnt so much being there.' Frankly, the boys in this department, are able to master the art of cooking many tasty dishes in a matter of months. In fact, when they go home, they surprise their parents with their preparations. But as far as this boy was concerned, he was just passionate to serve. And finally he got what he wanted, but it really set me thinking. I said to myself, 'Where on earth would you find a place where young hearts are pleading for a chance to serve!'

"When boys leave our school and join other hostels in the course of their further education, this is a department they never forget. Just a few days ago, a former student called me and in a melancholic voice said, 'Sir, I am sick. I cannot help but recollect how my brothers and teachers took care of me so lovingly when I was sick in Swami's hostel. I miss you all a lot. I miss your love.'

### **Doing the Right Thing When No One is Watching**

The draw of the Sri Sathya Sai Hostel is its compelling love energy that has its source in Bhagavan's love. "Swami, in His own way, instills these precious values so strongly in the young minds," says Dr. Shailesh Srivastava, and goes on to narrate one particular instance. "I know of a student who was found in the middle of the night cleaning the toilets! It was a strange coincidence that the teacher happened to visit the toilet in that late hour that day. He asked him, 'Why are you doing this? There are workers to take care of it in the morning.' The boy then put his head down and softly said, 'Swami told the other day that we must do some service activity which is unseen by others. He said that He will reward us if we render any service when nobody is noticing us. I thought no one will see me now, and that is why I was doing it secretly.' The teacher could see that the small boy was visibly upset for being discovered. This is how Swami creates diamonds out of dust."

### **Early Start to Ceiling on Desires**

The children in this hostel, at a very early age, learn how to be judicious when it comes to spending money. "The system is designed in such a way that the concept of 'ceiling on desires' gets embedded in their beings," says Mr. Venkateswarlu, who manages the hostel stores along with the help of a few

boys. "The singular purpose of hostel general stores is to help the boys, not earn profit. Moreover, it gives a chance to many boys working in this department to serve others. Interestingly, we have many innovative ways to see that the boys do not indulge in excessive spending. As soon as the boys join the hostel, they are given credit cards to make purchases in the hostel stores – a Rs. 50 card for every week. Only on case-to-case basis, are they given more cards whenever necessary. Therefore, the boys are always careful about spending their weekly amount, be it in fruit stall, stores, or any other expense. The small children in grade VIII do not like such restrictions in the beginning, but by the time they come to grade X, we have to persuade them to use their cards! One day when I asked one such boy, 'Why don't you buy something for yourself to eat?' He said, 'Sir, hostel food is good; I do not feel hungry. I do not want to spend parents' money unnecessarily.' "

The impact of this spirit of simplicity, service and contentedness extends beyond the inmates of the hostel. Mr. K. Ramakrishna, the parent of Sabareesh who completed his grade XII this year, says, "During the summer holidays in 2006, when I wanted to buy him a pair of costly clothes, my son refused. He suggested that we use that amount towards social welfare, and that is how we started feeding the 70 inhabitants of a home for the mentally challenged on the first Sunday of every month. We have been doing this for 18 months now."

Summing up what the hostel means to him, Abhay Kini, a student in grade XII, says, "In this hostel, we are not forced to become what the system or the teachers want, rather we are wholesomely assisted to become what we aspire to be. And here, one aspires not to be great, but good."

Uncovering the latent goodness in every child is what 'Educare' is all about, as Swami has often emphasized. The exemplary manner in which this enlightened concept of education is put into action greatly impacts the milieu and modus operandi of the Sathya Sai Junior Boys' Hostel and its inhabitants. The rest of humanity has only to see, appreciate and emulate.

## **THE ZENITH OF HOLISTIC LEARNING**

### **Part 6**

#### **DIVINE ENERGY FLOWS THROUGH HIS INSTRUMENTS - Extraordinary Educators Inspire Exemplary Pupils**

An alumnus of the Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School, Mr. A. Raghavendra is currently Vice President, ABN AMRO Bank N. V. in Bangalore. When asked what he cherishes the most from his time when he was a student at Swami's school, he is prompt to respond, "We had an environment that was pure and unsullied. We could easily concentrate on our academics, and at the same time do wonders in extra-curricular activities. More importantly, we had a dedicated band of teachers who left an indelible impression upon us at that impressionable age by the sheer power of their personal example. I still remember one particular day when I was in grade X. Our Board examinations were going on, and therefore, our room was not swept for two days. Each one of us was hard pressed for time, and the room, as a consequence, had become very dirty. That day, our hostel teacher, who was living in a room adjacent to ours, quietly came into our room when a very few of us were present. Without speaking a word or bothering any of us even a little, he picked up the broom, swept the room clean corner to corner, and left silently as if nothing had happened. This was in 1988, but it flashes in my memory and inspires me whenever I think of the school."

#### **Teachers Serve Sai in His Students**

Another alumnus of the school, Chaitanya Juluru, similarly goes down memory lane recalling his lasting impression of the school, says, "I was then in my XI grade. Extreme weakness and ill-health had confined me to the bed. All the symptoms pointed towards malaria. My body was shivering with cold and fever, even though I had covered myself completely with sleeping bags and blankets. When my hostel teacher noticed my condition, he returned with an oil bottle in his hand and started applying oil to my feet. I desisted because I felt embarrassed; the teacher was almost 3 times my age. I felt I was being disrespectful to allow my respected teacher to touch my feet, but he had no qualms about it. He did it with much love, and sure enough, my shivering ceased and I felt better. A day later, by Swami's grace, the malaria test too proved negative. But what touched me the most is what the teacher did which under normal circumstances, only my parents or brother would have done."

#### **Teachers the Most Inspiring Role Models**

Instances like this are innumerable. Ask any student of Swami's school and he will have a number of stories of how his teacher, without a second thought, cleaned the vomit on the corridor when his sick classmate threw up unexpectedly one day, or how he fed him with his own hands three times a day when his hands were hurt, or how he took extra classes everyday for only one student who needed more attention, or how he paid a boy's hostel fees

once he knew about his poor financial condition, and so on. "In the school I witnessed a set of individuals who practiced what they preached," says Mr. Surya Prakash Pati, an alumnus of the school currently pursuing his Ph. D in Management in IIT-Lucknow. He further adds, "The teachers were live definitions of the words 'love', 'sacrifice' and 'dedication'. They followed the same rules that we, as students, complied with. I am really proud that I had them in my life. I cannot explain in words how they have molded me."

### **Reforming Students At Source, Never By Force**

On one occasion when a student was leaving the school upon completion of his studies, he bowed down with reverence and gratitude, and touched his teacher's feet. His parents had come to take him, but he was in tears. The teacher consoled him saying "Swami will always be with you... you are never going to miss anything...do not worry...". His sorrow, however, was very deep. It was then that his parents revealed to the teacher their son's real story. "Before joining Swami's school, he had been absolutely uncontrollable," the father said. "On many occasions, he would just go out of the house and return very late in the night. When we questioned him, he would carelessly say 'How does it bother you?' And it is the same boy, who now touches our feet when he is home, and never leaves anywhere without our permission. When we see our son now, we feel so fortunate. We do not know how to express our gratitude to Swami and this wonderful school."

Another parent, Mr. Krishna Sundararajoo from Singapore, says, "When my son, Saishreyas, joined this School for grade XI, initially he used to ask me to bring lot of goodies and other items whenever I visited him. But now, he does not ask; he is happy with whatever I bring for him during Sunday visits. When he returns home during holidays, he gives talks at various Sai centres and willingly shares his ennobling experiences. And many people tell me he is matured not only spiritually, but also has become worldly-wise. His help in the house and respect to the parents and elders is exemplary."

### **Beacons of Sai Light Guide Parents**

Boys come to Swami's School as tiny buds and within a span of two years or more, they bloom into fragrant blossoms, spreading the fragrance of love wherever they go. The students on many occasions have become change-agents who have brought sweeping changes, not only in their family but also in their work place, and society at large. For instance, after completing his education in Swami's School and subsequently in the Institute, one alumnus joined a non-profit organization which worked for rural upliftment for a salary that was half or less than what his counterparts were being paid elsewhere. There are occasions when small children of the school have actually reunited their parents. Citing one case, Mr. Venkateswarlu, the Mathematics teacher who also stays in the hostel along with the boys, says, "This boy was at the same time in grade X. As I used to interact with him frequently and ask him about his welfare, just as I do with every student, one day he revealed to me that his parents were actually not living together. 'When I go to mother, my father gets upset, and vice versa.' Sharing more he said, 'My parents

separated over difference of opinion as to which school my younger brother should go.' I encouraged the boy saying since he is under Swami's care, the Lord would surely take care. 'Write letters to Swami as well as to your parents,' I advised. When you write to them explain that they are correct in their viewpoints, but they would be doing more good to your brother if they stayed together than otherwise. The boy did this for several months. He counseled and cajoled his parents through his letters asking them not be carried away by the opinions of friends and relatives, and think only about his and his brother's welfare. At the same time, his prayers to Swami continued. One fine day, his father arrived in the school! Overjoyed to see his son, he said to me, 'Nobody advised me better than my own son.' Soon the family reunited, but the father was keen that his son continues in this School after his grade X. The boy was fortunately successful in the selection tests, and is, in fact, now in grade XI."

### **Positivity Extends to Family**

Mr. C. Subramaniam, the parent of Giridhar and Aadarsh, says, "The improved behaviour and attitude of our sons has had a subtle effect on our lifestyle too. Because of our interaction with them, there is a strong urge in us to understand Swami's teachings in the right perspective and put them into practice in every day life. We feel they are real *satsang* (holy company) in our family; they definitely provide a positive input in everything."

### **High School a Vital Limb of the Sai University**

Apart from enriching their families and surroundings, one unique way the school contributes to Swami's education mission is by providing students of high caliber to Bhagavan's Sri Sathya Sai University. "In the last seventeen years, 90% of the gold medalists in Swami's University are former students of Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School," says Dr. Shailesh Srivastava, who teaches physics and stays with the boys in the hostel. The school, therefore, is a vital limb of the Sai University.

"The purpose of our existence is intertwined with Bhagavan's grand education mission. There is no difference," says the Principal, Mr. Shivramakrishnaiah. In fact, the school is a part of His divine master plan to present mankind with an alternate and most effective system of learning, which alone can rescue modern education from its present crisis, and raise it to a level where it can create enlightened individuals who could guide humanity to a new and noble destiny.

### **Alumni Draw Upon Hostel Experiences Forever**

Mr. Ratnakar Sharma, an alumnus of the school currently working as an Investment Banker in Citibank, says, "My stay in the school has changed my life in ways more than one. It has taught me to take decisions with the head as well as the heart, and to treat others just as you want others to treat you. It has inspired me to touch others' lives just as Swami has touched mine."



"Very clearly, we, as Swami's students, have advantage over others because of one factor – self-confidence, the basis of which is absolute faith. We know that Swami is always there with us to guide us through," says Mr. T. M. Gopikrishna, a school alumnus who works as a divisional head in Saint-Gobain Glass India Ltd. in Chennai. He adds, "This allows us to take risks both professionally and personally on matters we strongly believe in. In terms of outlook and personality, it has made me more empathetic to others. I realize that I need to look at personal equations from the other person's perspective, and this is exactly what Swami does too... Truly, whatever I am today it is because of my stay with Swami and at His school."

### **Gratifying Experience to Serve as Sai Teachers**

As for the teachers, they consider being with the students their single greatest fortune. "To be able to use my life for the children's welfare who are the harbingers of a new society where Sai ideals would be the norm than an exception, is what gives me a great sense of fulfillment," says Mr. Satheesh Babu. Another teacher, Mr. Sai Surendranath, says, "These children have, in fact, taught me the great virtue of equanimity. I am always inspired when I see them sacrifice so much so willingly and still keep a smiling face." The warden of the hostel, Mr. Janardhan, says, "Many of the students appear to me like sages. In fact, I feel they are here to contribute to my self-improvement more than anything else."

### **Reflecting the Energy of True Transformation**

With its open-to-all and free education policy, values and life-skills integrated curriculum, close bond between students and teachers, the school has emerged as the perfect blend of the ancient wisdom of the Gurukul system in a contemporary setting.

Increasingly, students, parents, educators, policy makers and government bodies around the world see the Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School as the ideal model of education to emulate for preparing wholesome students who can face the challenges of our times with a deeper sense of social and spiritual responsibility.

Today, without any publicity or promotion, the name and fame of this school has spread to all parts of the world, including non-English speaking countries, only due to the silent transforming power of those who have passed through its portals. Here the overall ambience, curriculum and the physical presence of living Divinity as the Founder, impacts the students at so many various levels that with every graduating batch, a new army of virtuous men enter the world as potential contributors towards the arising of a new consciousness, determined to lead humanity to a new age of enlightenment.

Not surprising though, since it has been designed personally by God and directed dexterously by His instruments, making it a warm and nurturing environment where students feel empowered enough to dare and live their lives as divine beings; where discipline, dedication and service are the first,

second and third languages; where the only subject that is never taught but is continuously learnt, practiced and perfected is Love. This Love is truly the real driver behind the success of the Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School – God's own garden of pious blossoms meant for spreading the fragrance of universal human values around the planet.

***P.S. While this feature highlights the boys' hostel and school, its counterpart, the girls school from Grade I through XII functions in a separate facility and is popularly known as the Sri Sathya Sai Primary School, which is indeed a misnomer as the school also participates in the Grade XII CBSE. We hope to bring you a detailed story on it in the near future.***

## **FEATURE ARTICLES**

### **IN QUEST OF INFINITY - Part 17**

*By Prof. G. Venkataraman*

Loving Sai Ram and greetings from Prashanti Nilayam. We are almost at the end our tour of the Cosmos, but that does NOT mean we have come to the end our quest. We still have a long, long way to go; more about that later but meanwhile, we do have to address an important question which is: "We have discussed lately, two models for the beginning of the Universe, one based on the by-now-standard *Inflation Model*, and another which is more a well developed idea rather than a model at present – I am of course referring to the *Ekpyrotic Model* of Steinhardt and Turok, with which we have been preoccupied in the last few issues of H2H. As I told you, it would be some time before the mathematics of the *Ekpyrotic Model* are explored in full detail; right now that appears to be too tough a problem and must await future analysis. But meanwhile, one can ask: "Leave aside all that fancy theoretical stuff. Is there any way hard core experimentalists can give a verdict? They have done this many times in the history of Physics. Can they pull it off one more time, and if so, what does it take?" Well, that is exactly the issue I shall be dealing with this time. As it turns out, God is quite fair! If the task ahead is very difficult for theoretical physicists, it is even more formidable where experimentalists are concerned. That story next!

#### **Going Back in Time at the Speed of Light**

Basically we want to know what happened a long, long time ago, almost at the time of the birth of Universe. Now how does one look back in time? We do not have a Time Machine to travel back and forth in Time as H.G. Wells had in one of his famous novels. But there is one clever trick that astronomers have been using for a long time and I have already told you about it. Basically, they say, "Listen, we all know that fast as it is, light does take a certain amount of time to travel; its speed is not infinite; therefore, if we pick up light that left its source say a million years ago, then we can get a glimpse of what happened a million years ago. This is the simplest way of going back in Time and reconstructing the past history of the Universe."

This is a very important point and we seldom appreciate it. I mean if right now I look at the Sun – not directly of course! – then the sunlight that would be hitting my eyes would actually have left the Sun about eight minutes ago; that is the time it takes for light to travel from the Sun to the Earth. You get the idea, I presume. In this way, if we have very powerful telescopes and are able to pick up light that is very faint – and this is being done all the time – then we can say we are peeping far back in time. The question now becomes: "How far back in time can one go in this manner? Is there any limit or can one go in this manner all the way back to the instant when the Universe was born?"

It turns out that there IS a definite answer which is that at best, we can go back to say about 200,000 or 300,000 years after birth. We CANNOT use this trick for times **prior** to that. Why? The answer is connected with the fact that almost all of astronomy is done using some part or the other of the electromagnetic spectrum. To put it more simply, when we use an ordinary telescope, we are using ordinary light as a messenger from the past. Instead of visible light, we can use light of longer wavelengths like infra-red radiation, or microwaves, or even radio waves. Or else, we can use electromagnetic radiation of wavelength shorter than visible light, like ultra violet radiation, x rays, or even gamma rays. Almost 98 % of astronomy or perhaps even more, gets done this way. However, electromagnetic astronomy cannot be applied to times prior to about 200,000 years, because the Universe was opaque at that time. That means that electromagnetic messenger waves got absorbed before they travelled far. However, gravity waves of those times could be tapped for information, provided we know how to catch them. Gravitational astronomy has yet to get started because we have not even detected any gravitational wave. In BOX 1, I have explained what exactly is a gravitational wave and therefore I shall not repeat that here. But there are some implications that I shall now point out.

### How Mass Affects Space and Time

Let me first take you back a few issues [to QFI 05] when I discussed some of the implications of Einstein's Theory of General Relativity and Gravitation. I mentioned then that according to this theory, when space-time becomes curved, it implies the existence of a mass. I realise this is a far from adequate way of describing what the theory actually says, but for our purposes, I think it is OK to say when we talk about an object with a certain mass  $m$  say, it means that space in the neighbourhood of the object is actually warped. Thus we can either talk in terms of masses [as we normally do] or in terms of local curvatures of space-time [when we use Einstein's theory]. Take first a good look at the figure below.

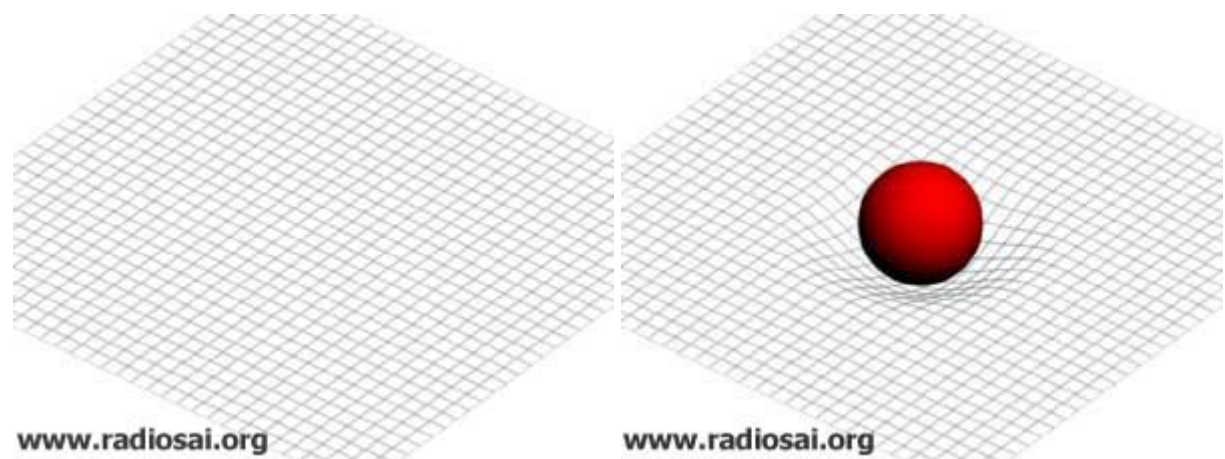


Figure 1: Shown here via a two dimensional grid is the concept of space-time warp. According to Einstein's theory of general relativity, space remains unwarped when empty, that is free from matter. However, when matter is present, space gets warped.

*Although we have illustrated the idea here with a two-dimensional drawing, we must remember that our space is really three-dimensional. The point is just this: Matter distorts space. In fact, one can even say that matter is just a “hump” or may be a “dimple” in space! Professor Wheel describes the relationship between space warp and matter in an interesting way. He says: “Matter tells spacetime how to curve, and spacetime tells matter how to move!”*

The above figure tells us if there is a mass,  $m$  say, then space-time in its neighbourhood gets warped. Suppose the mass  $m$  is moved; what happens to the curvature in space-time that I just mentioned? What happens is similar to what happens when we take a paddle and stir up water in a lake. The effect of the stir would propagate as a disturbance on the surface of the water and reach other spots. Suppose we have a piece of cork on the water surface some distance away. When the disturbance reaches the cork, it would start going up and down, indicating to us that it is experiencing the passage of the wave in its neighbourhood. The same thing happens when a mass is moved in space-time. It generates a gravitational wave that moves at the speed of light. And when this wave encounters another mass [that I shall call the test mass], it would disturb the curvature of space-time associated with the test mass. In practical terms, the test mass would experience a distortion in its shape. In particular, in one direction perpendicular to the direction of the wave it would get squeezed, while simultaneously experiencing an elongation in the perpendicular direction. A little later, the squeeze would be replaced by elongation while the elongation would be replaced by a squeeze. In other words, there would be periodic distortions of the shape of the test mass, the frequency being that of the gravitational wave. See Figure 2. By the way, these frequencies are generally quite low, ranging from about 1000 cycles/sec to as low as  $10^{-4}$  cycles/sec.

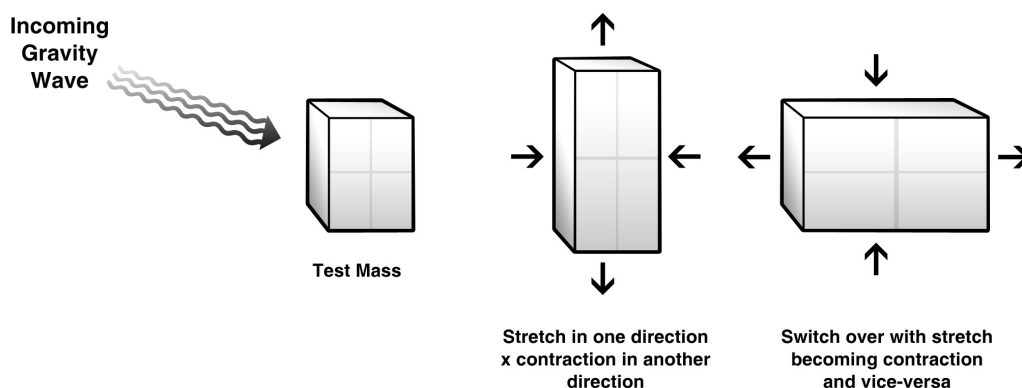


Fig 02

**FIGURE 2:** This figure shows how a mass gets distorted when impacted by a gravity wave. Basically the gravity wave stretches the object in one direction while contracting it at the same time in a perpendicular direction. This is done

*periodically, that is to say stretch-contract is followed by contract-stretch which is followed by a repeat of stretch-contract and so on. In other words, the mass shape of the mass undergoes oscillations. To detect a gravity wave, one must basically detect these oscillations of distortion. The problem is that these oscillations are incredibly small – that is where the problem is!*

### **Searching for the Elusive Gravity Wave**

What it all boils down to is that if we want to detect a gravitational wave, we should be able to detect low frequency distortions of say a large metallic object, say a cylinder. The problem is that the distortions are extremely small. How small? Well, about the size of an atomic nucleus! That's tough, and that is why gravitational waves have not been detected thus far. This does not mean no one has tried. It has been, and a bit of that story is narrated in BOX 1.

Alright, so no one has detected a gravitational wave, but is there any evidence for it, even if say a bit indirect? There sure is and a pretty spectacular one too, one that in fact fetched two people the Nobel Prize! That story is told in BOX 2. What we learn from these two boxes is that 1) terrestrial detection of gravity waves is a tough job, 2) that said, there is clear [indirect] evidence that gravity waves do exist, and technology having made vast leaps, there is a lot of incentive to kick start gravitational astronomy.

The proponents of gravitational astronomy argue, "Currently, the gravitational-wave 'sky' is entirely unexplored. Since many prospective gravitational wave sources have no corresponding electromagnetic signature (e.g., black hole interactions), there are good reasons to believe that the gravitational-wave sky will be substantially different from the electromagnetic one. Mapping the gravitational-wave sky will provide an understanding of the Universe in a way that electromagnetic observations cannot. As a new field of astrophysics, it is quite likely that gravitational wave observations will uncover new classes of sources not anticipated in our current thinking." Since detecting gravity waves is a tough job, gravitational astronomy does not come cheap; so the supporters have had to compete hard to get some funding, and finally, a start has been made.

Many projects have been planned and are currently in various stages of implementation; understandably, the biggest of them is in America, It is called LIGO, standing for Laser Interferometric Gravitational Observatory, and the principle involved can be understood by consulting Fig. 3 below. The basic idea is this; Imagine drawing two long straight lines on the surface of the earth, lines that are exactly perpendicular to each other, and intersect at a point. Suppose a gravity wave passes through that region. If you recall an earlier remark that the passage of gravity waves essentially makes space-time itself to go into oscillation, then it is easy to understand that the space-time associated with these two lines would contract and stretch as in the Fig. 3. What Joseph Weber tried to do [BOX 1] was to have a large aluminium bar and see how it responded to the warps in space-time [recall Fig.2]. The new idea was to get rid of the bar altogether and use space-time itself.

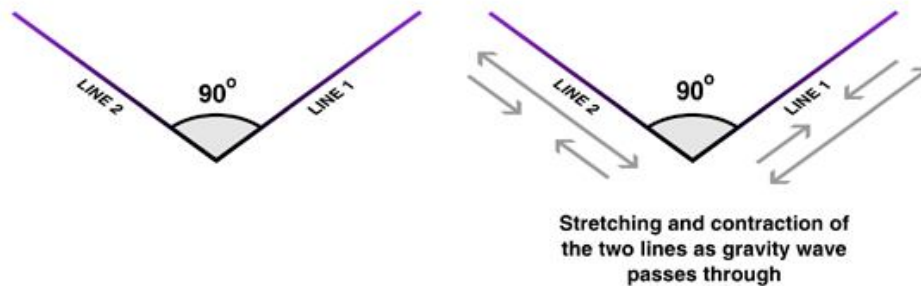


Fig 03

**FIGURE 3:** This schematic helps us to understand the basic idea underlying the LIGO. Imagine two long straight lines on the surface of the earth. When a gravity wave passes through this region, this part of space would get periodically warped. If one can somehow pick up those oscillatory warps, then one would have a way of detecting gravity waves. As explained in the text, an old trick of optics is used to pick up those oscillating space warps.

Now you may ask: "OK, gravity waves make the space along the two lines oscillate as the result of the contraction and expansion they produce. So what? No one can see space; so what's the use?" Ah, that's where human ingenuity comes into the picture. You see for about three hundred years at least, people have learnt to inter-compare distances using light beams. The way this works is explained in Fig. 4.

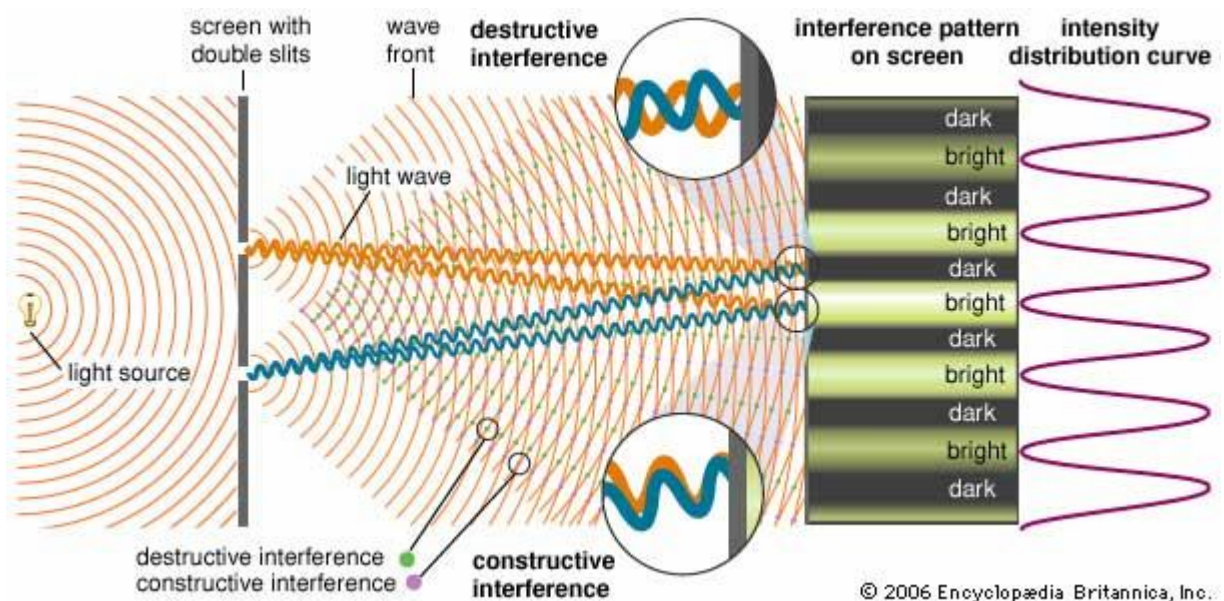




FIGURE 4: *This figure shows how tow light beams can interfere to produce a interference pattern.*

Gravitational astronomers said: "We will split a laser beam into two beams, make one go along one path and the other one along the other. At the end of the paths, we would put mirrors, so that the two beams get reflected and return to the starting point. There, we would try to see whether they arrive at the same time or at different times. How? Via interference fringes. The idea is illustrated in Fig. 5

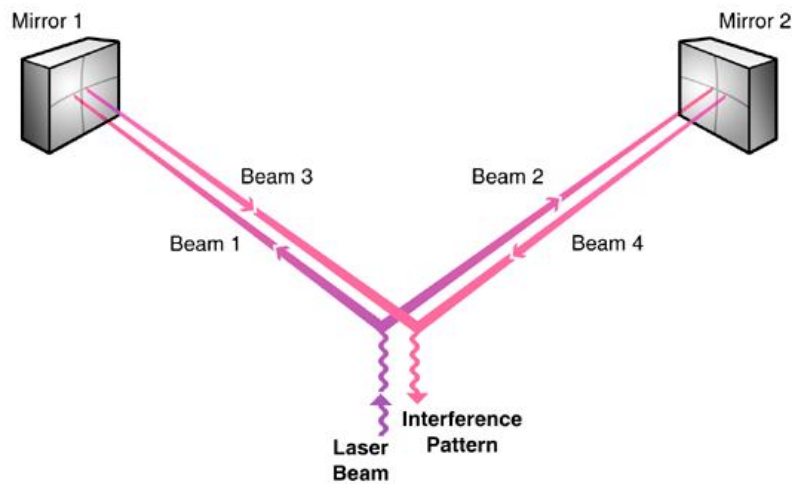


Fig 05

FIGURE 5: *This figure gives an idea of the principle behind the LIGO. Basically light from a laser is split into two beams and sent along two perpendicular directions for say about 4 km or so. At the end of the path, there are mirrors which reflect the beams back. The beams return, interfere and produce a fringe system. If a gravity wave passes through, the fringe system would be set into oscillations. The task now is to detect these oscillations.*

The problem is that even when there is no gravity wave, the fringe system would wobble due to all sorts of terrestrial disturbances. Riding on top of all these would be the space-time quakes, and the problem is to detect these. Researchers said, "We think we can do it, and so give us the money!" The campaigners have succeeded and managed to get some money to do some proof of concept experiments. Two LIGO labs have been established and they are located at Hanford, Washington and Livingston, Louisiana. The work of these labs would involve two phases, an initial phase and an advanced phase.



## **Two Massive Labs to Detect the Waves**

LIGO Hanford Observatory (LHO), located on the U.S. Department of Energy Hanford site in eastern Washington, comprises 5 major experimental halls for the interferometer spread over 5 miles. 1.2-m diameter ultrahigh vacuum tubing connects these halls. Three support buildings house laboratories, offices, and an amphitheater, and two additional buildings are associated with maintenance and operations. Approximately 90,000 square feet of this space is under tight environmental control to minimize contamination of sensitive equipment. The physical plant has been designed to provide a low vibration environment similar to the surrounding undeveloped shrub-steppe environment.

LHO houses two interferometers with arm lengths of 4 km and 2 km. The 4-km equipment is installed in vacuum chambers in the corner station and the two end stations on each arm. The 2-km equipment uses vacuum chambers in the corner station and the two mid-stations situated halfway down each arm. The two interferometers share 2 km of beam tube along each arm. The beam tube can eventually accommodate up to 5 interferometer beams and the current station buildings can accommodate up to 3 interferometers to accommodate future growth.

The LIGO Livingston Observatory, located in pine forests between Baton Rouge and New Orleans, Louisiana, is the site of a single 4-km laser interferometer gravitational wave detector. Construction of its physical facilities, scaled to accommodate one interferometer, is complete. The beam tube dimensions are identical to those at LHO.

I must now make a few remarks to indicate how tough these experiments are. Gravity waves being weak, the wobbles that one is looking for in the interference pattern would also be very tiny. Hence, one must take all the precaution one can to keep confusing signals to a rock bottom, and that is where most of the money gets spent. This is called achieving a high signal-to-noise ratio, and boy does achieving a high ratio swallow money?! Where do these disturbing signals come from? From many sources; if the light path is in air, then the air molecules can cause problems, and so one has to have a vacuum tube all along the light path, as you can see in the photo above. The laser beam can fluctuate and that could mean problems. Small seismic disturbances can disturb the reflecting mirrors which mean more problems, which is why these labs are located in remote places to the extent possible.

The instruments that are being installed to get going are called Initial LIGO, to be soon followed by what is called Advanced LIGO, which would enhance detection sensitivity by more than a factor of 10 over the entire initial range of frequencies that LIGO would operate in. Just to give you an idea of what that means, what Initial LIGO would be able to achieve during one whole year would get done by the advanced machine in a few hours. I should add that though the LIGO labs are located in America, the US has opened the door for international collaboration, via what is called LIGO Scientific Collaboration [LSC]. LSC includes scientists from India, Russia, Germany, U.K., Japan and

Australia. The international partners are involved in all aspects of the LIGO research program. Initial LIGO would start operations in 2009. By 2011, installation of Advanced LIGO would commence even while the Initial LIGO would slowly be decommissioned.

### **Outer Space Makes for Better Experimental Conditions**

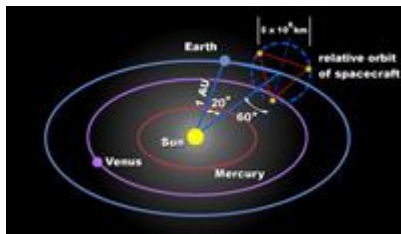
OK, so what must one do to make gravity wave detection even more sensitive. The first and the most obvious thing to do is to increase the length of the arm of the interferometer. But then, due to the curvature of the earth, we cannot go too far in that direction. If we want to increase the length, then there is only way to do it, go into space! And that has given birth to the idea called Laser Interferometer Space Antenna, known better as LISA. In a sense, LISA is like LIGO, with two interferometric arms. However, the arms are out in space.

Here's how it works: A laser beam from one of the spacecraft is pointed toward a detector on another spacecraft, 5 million kilometers away. The laser beam precisely measures a distance between the two spacecraft. When the distance changes, an interference pattern is formed, and LISA has detected a gravitational wave. The three arms of the spacecraft work together to confirm each other's observations, as well as to get more detailed information about the passing waveform.

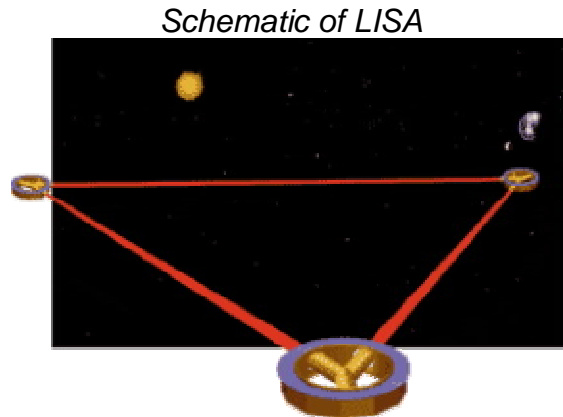
LISA can measure a change in length approximately 1000 times smaller than the diameter of an atom (or about 30 times the size of the nucleus of an atom!). To measure the very small strains expected for gravitational waves, the distance between spacecraft must be very large - about 5 million km. This is approximately 13 times the distance between the earth and the moon. This observatory will be very sensitive!

LISA can measure a change in length approximately 1000 times smaller than the diameter of an atom (or about 30 times the size of the nucleus of an atom!). To measure the very small strains expected for gravitational waves, the distance between spacecraft must be very large - about 5 million km. This is approximately 13 times the distance between the earth and the moon. This observatory will be very sensitive!

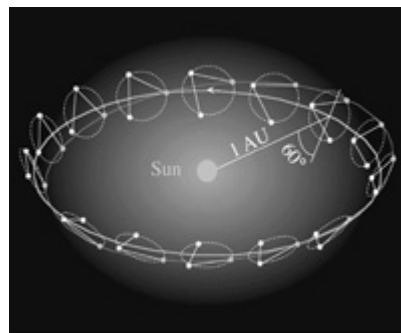
The two detectors (LIGO and LISA) complement each other because they cover different frequency ranges. (See illustration below.) Ground-based detectors cannot see very low frequencies because the ground moves too much (remember - these detectors can see motions that are smaller than the size of atoms). A space-based detector that is free from the motion of the earth is the only way to see low frequencies.



*Schematic of LISA's Orbit*



*Schematic of LISA*



*LISA going round the Sun*

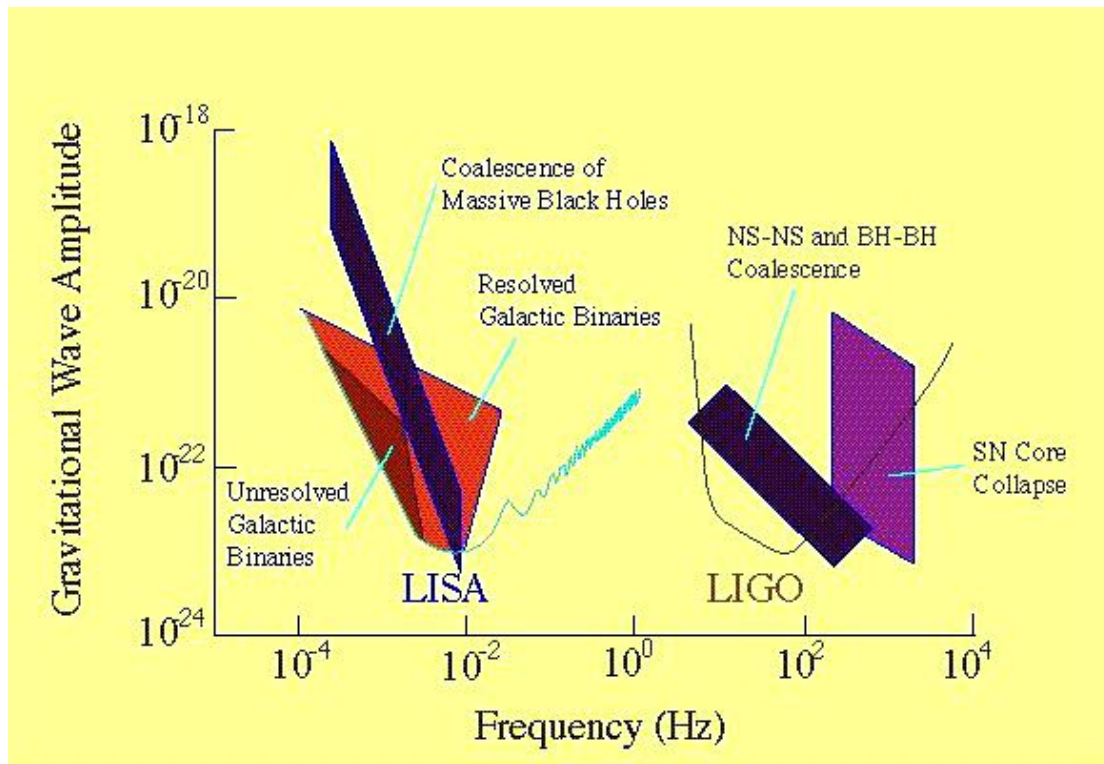
According to the current concept, the three identical LISA spacecraft will be launched together on a single Atlas V launcher. They will then independently reach their final orbits around the Sun using their propulsion modules that will be jettisoned prior to starting the scientific operations. The three spacecraft will be located at the vertices of a triangle, with an arm's length of 5 million kilometres. The orbits will be similar to that of the Earth, but will trail our planet by approximately 50 million kilometres.

It will take one year for the three spacecraft to reach their final position and to start the actual mission. The LISA triangle will face the Sun, at an angle of 60 degrees to the plane of Earth's orbit, revolving with Earth around the Sun.

These heliocentric orbits for the three spacecraft were chosen so that the triangular formation is maintained throughout the year, with the triangle appearing to rotate about the centre of the formation once per year. The relative movement of the three spacecraft will help to detect the direction of each source and to reveal the nature of the gravitational waves.

The distance between the spacecraft determines the frequency range in which LISA can make observations; it has been carefully chosen to allow

observation of most of the interesting sources of gravitational radiation, namely massive black holes and binary stars.



*This plot shows the range of gravitational wave amplitudes and frequencies that LISA and LIGO will be sensitive to. Shaded areas show the frequency and amplitude of gravitational waves given off by different types of objects. (NS = Neutron Star, BH = Black Hole, SN = Supernova Remnant.)*

This figure to which I referred earlier, shows the frequency ranges in which LIGO and LISA operate. As you can see, the frequency bands are very different, and the kind of phenomena that can be studied are also different. In short, the two machines would complement each other. Right now, LISA is a concept, and one must see if it would get the funding required to get built and launched! Even it is, I do not know if it can help in getting answers related to the early Universe. However, it would teach us how to do advanced gravitational astronomy, and that in due course, would lead on to more sensitive and sophisticated astronomy – that is the way astronomy has always marched forward.

OK, it is clear we must use gravitational astronomy if we are to get answers to some tough questions relating to the very early history of our Universe, particularly regarding the question whether there was inflation as many say there was, or whether our Universe was born according to the script given by the Ekpyrotic Model. The big question now is: "Will gravitational astronomy ever reach that stage as to give us some definitive answers?" My response is: "If the question is whether technology can ever rise to that level and whether

humans can ever rise to that level of excellence, the answer is a clear yes. However, there is a big IF!"

### **The Big 'Ifs' of Funding**

IF? Why is that? Well, it all depends upon where humanity would be in say fifty years from now. In my lifetime, I have seen between the fifties and the nineties, progress no one, and I mean no one could have forecast way back in 1955, for instance. Technology reached amazing heights, and thanks to it, impossible feats got done. But since then, we have also been getting very strong signals that those sunny days could become dreams of the past.

It all boils down to a few basic issues which include the following:

1. Availability of funds.
2. Competing priorities in Society.
3. Human resource pool.
4. Co-operation between nations.

A few comments now on all these issues combined. In the period from the fifties to the nineties, funds for basic research simply flowed, thanks to the huge support received by the scientific community in America. In this sense, America set the pace and others followed. In those days, there were not many competing priorities for the simple reason that in fields like biology, for example, there were no mega projects like one saw in Physics. But soon, there came projects like the Human Genome Project which demanded substantial funding.

Meanwhile many social problems began to become acute, and politicians in America who once tried to outdo each other in the matter of voting for funds for basic research, now began to have second thoughts – after all, they had to survive and for that, the vote bank was important. Just to illustrate the point, I might mention that in the eighties, physicists in America dreamed up a huge accelerator project called the Superconducting Super Collider [SSC for short]. It was to be the world's biggest accelerator, and thanks to the huge campaign [in which the political angle was duly played up, meaning how America could not afford to be second to Europe], funds were voted not only for doing various preliminary studies but for actually going ahead with the project.

The giant machine was due to come up in Texas, and the machine as conceived was MUCH bigger than the machine now getting ready to operate in Geneva. Construction work actually started but then came the issue of competing priorities. Many in the US felt, "What is the big idea of spending billions of dollars for finding out something that might be very exciting for a few hundred physicists may be when we desperately need dollars for providing healthcare benefits for the poor?" I still remember seeing in 1990 on America TV [when I was briefly in that country on some work] an old man appearing and saying with a long drawl, "I don't know what these scientists want to spend so much on finding out something which nobody can understand, when there is no money to take care of old people like me? Will

somebody explain to me why our tax dollars should be spent to make these scientists happy, abandoning at the same time old folks like me?"

I suppose you get the idea. By the way, while social activists were waging their campaign, there was a lot of sniping from within the scientific community itself, including from within the Physics community! I know how many solid state physicists were bitter about the way funds were cut from their programs for diversion to high energy physics. That should give some idea of competing priorities. These days, there are additional items on the list of priorities, like the so-called war on terror, etc.

There is more to this. The kind of projects I described would require launches of many satellites into space. About seventy percent at least of this funding has to come from America, which means NASA [National Aeronautic and Space Administration] must get the funding for it; Europe, Russia, and Japan might pitch in with the balance, perhaps. But right now, the NASA budget is very tight, and within that organisation, there are many competing priorities. There are some who want more of human exploration of the Moon followed by a Mars landing by humans. Then there are all kinds of satellite experiments that astronomers want flown. Then are people who want money for more development on the technology side. Among this fairly large group of competitors, would be the group that wants satellites for gravitational astronomy.

If you ask me, based on various current problems facing humanity, I doubt very much if the kind of astronomy that is called for to decide issues relating to inflation v/s Ekpyrotic model does stands much chance of getting funding for a long time. So maybe, we would not know the answer via experiments. However, there is a chance that good computer models might emerge, whose predictions could be tested via other experimental methods that are less costly. That said, direct confirmation by observing gravitational signatures would take a long, long time.

That's all for this issue and next time we are going to take a sharp turn. Where would that take us? Join me again next month to find out!

0-0-0

### **BOX 1 – Additional information**

When Newton discovered the Law of Gravitation, the question arose: Suppose a mass  $m_1$  is separated from another  $m_2$  by distance  $r$ ; suppose the distance  $r$  is increased by a small amount, by moving the mass  $m_1$  further away from  $m_2$ . How would mass  $m_2$  know about this increase of separation, and how long would it be before  $m_2$  becomes aware of the change of separation? It was argued in those days that the transmission of information about the movement of  $m_1$  would be instantaneous. This was called the *Principle of Action at a Distance*. However, when it became clear from Einstein's *Special Theory of Relativity* [developed in 1905] that information

could NOT travel faster than the speed of light, the *Principle of Action at a Distance* got automatically ruled out.

So what next? Well, Maxwell's Electromagnetic Theory gave a hint about the way out. And Einstein took the hint and in 1915 came up his *Theory of General Relativity*, which allowed gravitation also to be described in terms of a field, very similar to what is done in Maxwell's theory. And even as Maxwell described the transmission of electromagnetic information from one point to another via electromagnetic waves, Einstein stated that gravitational information too is transmitted in terms of gravitational waves, which travel at the speed of light. So, there was no more any need for the *Principle of Action at a Distance*.

That was fine, but what about experimental evidence for gravitational waves? Well, one of the earliest attempts to detect such disturbances was made by Joseph Weber of the University of Maryland in College Park. Weber used solid aluminium cylinders, about 2 meters long and 1 meter in diameter, and suspended them on steel wires. A passing gravitational wave would set one of these cylinders vibrating at its resonant frequency--about 1660 hertz--and piezoelectric crystals firmly attached around the cylinder's waist would convert that ringing into an electrical signal.

Weber took great pains to isolate the cylinders from vibration and from local seismic and electromagnetic disturbances, and claimed that the only significant source of background noise came from random thermal motion of the aluminium atoms. On account of this random thermal motions, the cylinder's length was expected to vary erratically by about  $10^{-16}$  meters, less than a proton's diameter. This might seem very small but the expected gravitational wave signal was not much bigger. So basically, Weber was trying a very difficult experiment.

Eventually, Weber looked for bumps in the data that exceeded some "threshold" that he characterized the background noise; however, he did not define this threshold consistently or precisely.

Weber's used two bars and looked for signals in both bars within the same half-second period. His argument was that if the same signal is seen in both bars it was a genuine signal and not a random bump seen simultaneously in both bars by sheer accident. After seeing some coincident events between two Maryland bars, Weber moved one of his cylinders to Argonne National Laboratory, near Chicago, about 1000 kilometers away.

In 1969 he published a paper reporting about two dozen coincident detections at the two locations in an 81-day period. He calculated that some of the signals were so large that coincidences by chance should happen only once in hundreds or thousands of years. This was "good evidence" for gravitational waves, he argued. The following year he claimed to have detected 311 coincident signals in a 7 month period, with a directional concentration, moreover, pointing toward the centre of the Milky Way.

The second announcement in particular created a stir and many groups decided to repeat Weber's experiments. However, none of these groups ever saw anything but random noise. People then began to analyse in detail why Weber alone saw signals that no one else saw. It was finally concluded that Weber being an electrical engineer who entered physics later in his career, did not know enough about rigorous data analysis and statistical evaluation. As Tyson, one of those who repeated Weber's experiment says, "Inadequate controls and lack of rigour in data analysis turned out to be Weber's downfall." By the late 1970s, everyone but Weber agreed that his claimed detections were spurious.

While Weber was proved wrong no doubt, physicists now got hooked on gravity wave detection. In that respects, says Tyson, Weber deserves credit for drawing others into this field of physics, adding, "It was the difficulty that attracted us."

## **BOX 2 – Additional information**

As I have mentioned elsewhere, there is plenty of evidence for the correctness of Einstein's ***Theory of General Relativity*** [see, for example, QFI 05]. However, direct detection of gravitational waves has been something of a quest for the Holy Grail. Detection of gravity waves involves detecting signals that are extremely feeble and could be easily masked. So, it basically boils down to a signal-to-noise ratio problem, or to use a popular phrase, a problem similar to searching for a needle in a haystack.

In 1974, Russell Hulse and Joseph Taylor of Princeton University detected a pulsar designated PSR 1913+16. It was one member of a binary system; that meant the pulsar had a companion star, and the two were orbiting around a common centre of mass. In this case, the companion was not visible. Prolonged measurements made on the pulsar showed that the orbital period of the pulsar [that is, the time for it to complete an orbit (about eight hours)] was steadily decreasing. The decrease was extremely small being about 0.000414 seconds in four years! What amazing accuracy!! The question then became: Why this decrease? The widely accepted explanation is that the binary system is losing energy through the emission of gravitational waves, causing the two stars to slowly spiral towards each other. This spiralling in turn would cause a decrease of the orbital period of the pulsar. In 1993, Hulse and Taylor were awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics for their discovery. At present, no one is doubting the existence of gravitational waves; but then, there is nothing like actually detecting them! For the benefit of the more curious, I offer below some more details, throwing more light on what exactly Hulse and Taylor did.

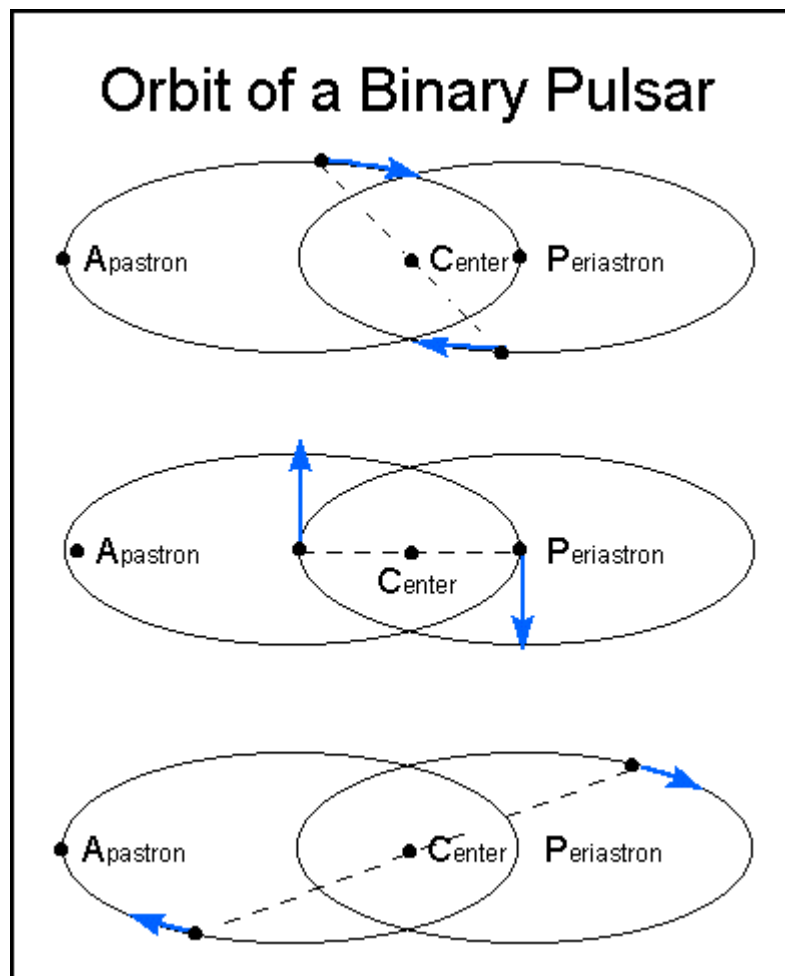
The first thing I would like to mention is that the pulsar detected by Hulse and Taylor was quite unusual – it was spinning rather fast compared to all pulsars known earlier; it was rotating about its axis 17 times per second, and thus its radio pulses were coming quite fast, at the rate of once every few



milliseconds. For this reason, this pulsar was often called the millisecond pulsar.

Now until then, all pulsars were known to maintain their periodicity to a high degree of accuracy. However, in this case, Hulse and Taylor noticed that there was a systematic variation in the arrival of the pulses. Sometimes, the pulses arrived a little sooner than expected while at other times, they arrive a bit later than they were supposed to. These variations occurred in a smooth manner and repeated every 7.75 hours. This gave them the clue that their pulsar was a member of a binary star.

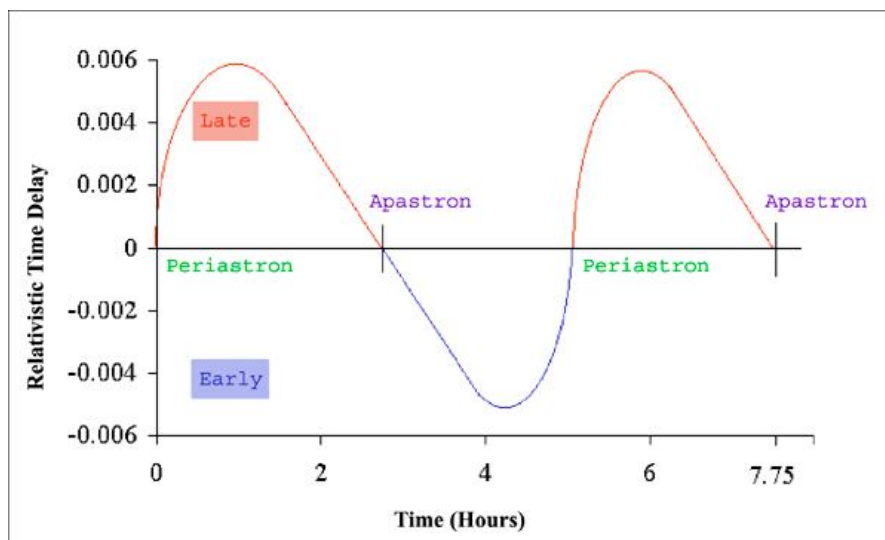
Binary stars are quite well-known in astronomy; basically, they are a pair of stars each of which moves in an elliptic orbit around a common centre of mass, as shown in the figure below. As you can see from the figure, the orbits are quite eccentric. The minimum separation is about 1.1 solar radius, and the position at which this occurs is called *periastron*. There is similarly a maximum separation which occurs at *apastron*, the separation being about 4.8 times the radius of our Sun. In the case of PSR 1913+16, the orbit is inclined at about 45 degrees with respect to the plane of the sky, and it is oriented such that periastron occurs nearly perpendicular to our line of sight.



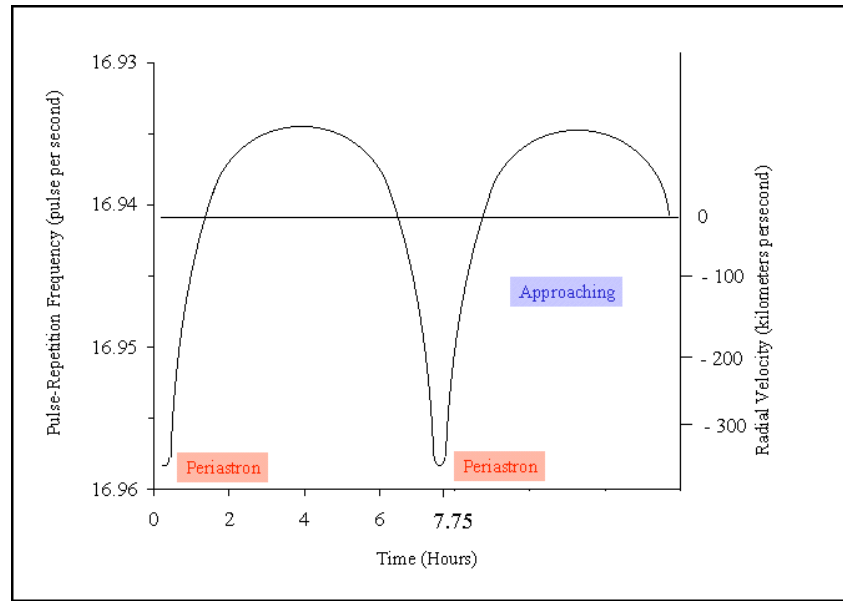
*FIGURE 1: This figure shows schematically how a pair of stars forming a binary perform a celestial and rhythmic dance of their own. Their special positions described in the text are also identified. The blue arrows indicate the directions of motion of the two stars in their various positions.*

The famous laws that Kepler discovered many centuries ago tell us that a celestial object would move slower when it is at apastron than when it is at periastron. The more the eccentricity of the orbit, the greater is the difference in velocity between these two positions. In the case of the pulsar PSR 1913+16, the velocity varies from a minimum of 75 km/sec to a maximum of 300 km/sec. By carefully studying the rate at which the pulses were arriving, Hulse and Taylor were able, to start with, infer all the details of the orbital motion of both the stars in the binary.

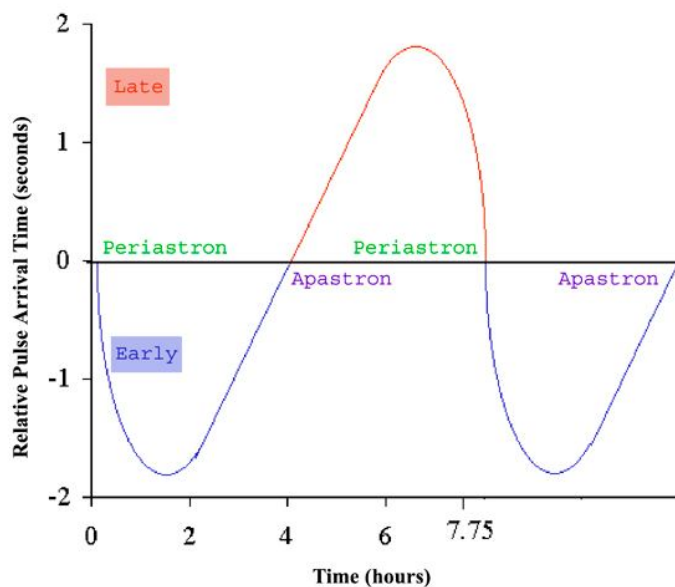
The following figure illustrates how one might infer the size of the orbit in a simple case. Suppose one had a pulsar with no companion star; as you can see from the figure, during its orbital motion, the pulsar is sometimes closer to the earth while at other times, it is farther away from the earth. Thus, when the pulsar is closer, its pulses would arrive earlier, while when it is far away, the pulses would be slightly delayed. By studying the time difference, one can get a good idea of the size of the orbit. In the case of a binary star, one has to get the picture of both the orbits, by getting information from just one member; that is a bit more involved, but can be and is in fact regularly done. The next two figures throw more light on how features related to the orbit are deduced from experimental data.



*FIGURE 2: As is evident from the figure, the pulses take less time to arrive at the earth when the pulsar is at one end as compared to the other. From this, one can infer the size of the orbit. The exercise is relatively easy when the pulsar is all by itself; however, when it forms part of a binary, unravelling the orbital details becomes more involved; but it can be done, as it was in this case.*

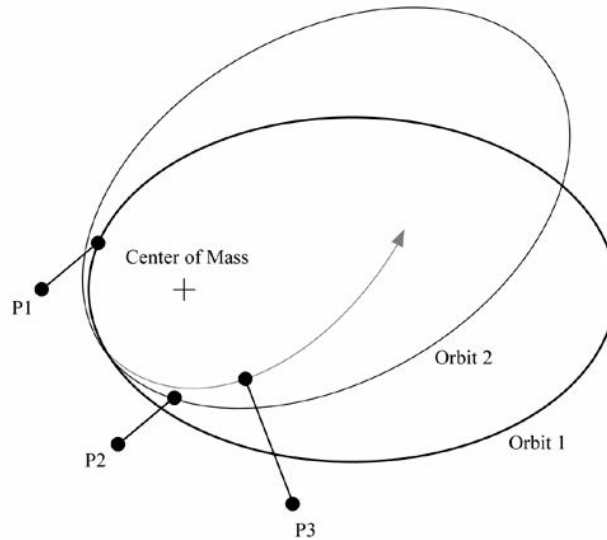


**FIGURE 3:** This figure shows actual data, namely the pulse frequency as a function of time. There are many features to be noted here. The first is that negative velocities, [that is, the velocity when the pulsar is approaching the earth] are larger than positive velocities [velocities when the pulsar is moving away from the earth]. This means the orbit is highly eccentric. Notice also that the pattern repeats every 7.75 hours.



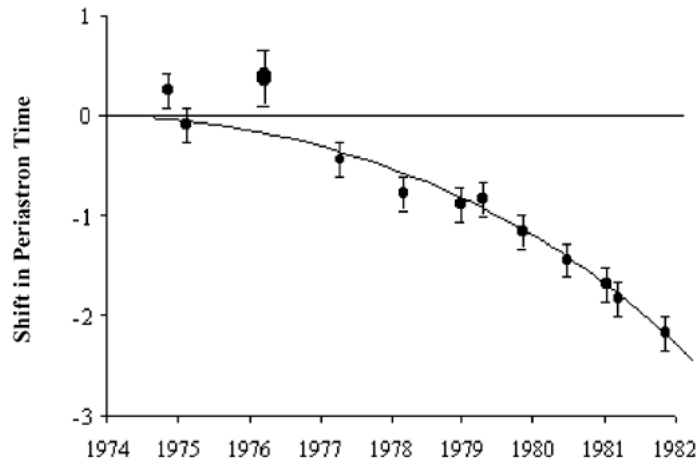
**FIGURE 4:** While the previous figure showed data with respect to pulse frequencies, this figure shows data with respect to pulse arrival times. The pulsar arrival times also vary as the pulsar moves through its orbit. When the pulsar is on the side of its orbit closest to the Earth, the pulses arrive more than 3 seconds earlier than they do when it is on the side furthest from the Earth. The difference is caused by the shorter distance from Earth to the

pulsar when it is on the close side of its orbit. The difference of 3 light seconds implies that the orbit is about 1 million kilometers across. Thus, by combining the data of the various figures one not only gets an idea of the shape but also the size of the orbits.



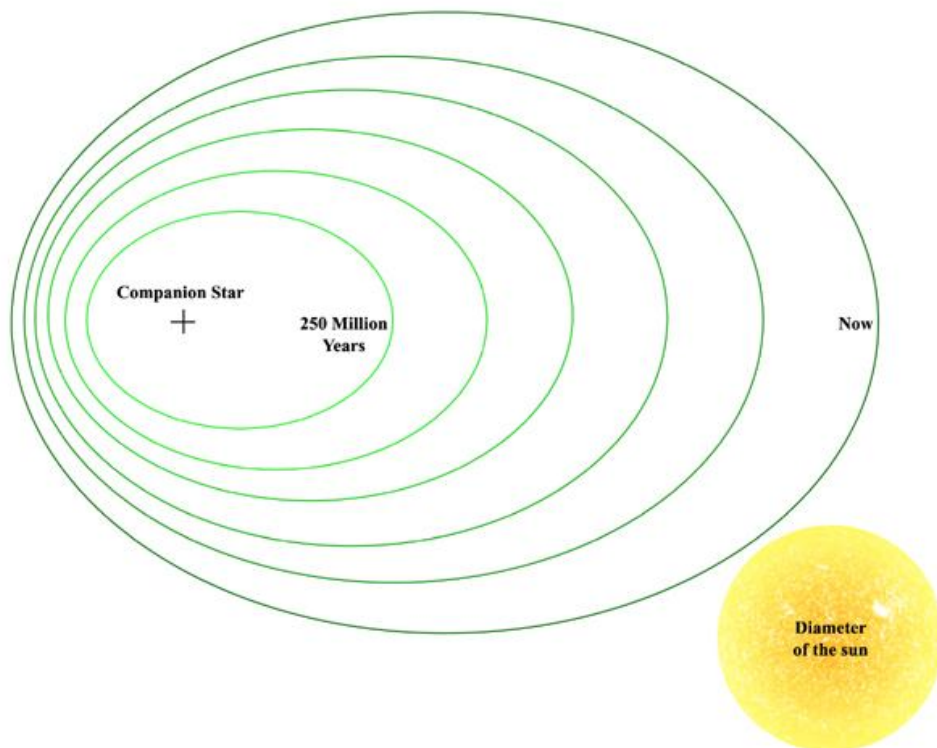
**FIGURE 5:** The orbit of the pulsar appears to rotate with time; in the diagram, notice that the orbit is not a closed ellipse, but a continuous elliptical arc whose point of closest approach (periastron) rotates with each orbit. The rotation of the pulsar's periastron is analogous to the advance of the perihelion of Mercury in its orbit. The observed advance for PSR 1913+16 is about 4.2 degrees per year; the pulsar's periastron advances in a single day by the same amount as Mercury's perihelion advances in a century.

Now the radio pulses coming from the pulsar are like the ticks of a clock. Hulse and Taylor realised that they could look for changes in the pulse rate caused by relativistic effects. Einstein's *Theory of General Relativity* predicts that due to changing warps in space-time associated with the motion of the members of the binary, the system would lose energy which would get converted into gravitational radiation. When the system systematically loses energy, the orbit also shrinks. In practical terms, when the orbit shrinks, the pulses arrive earlier than they would if there was no shrinkage. The figure below shows data obtained by Hulse and Taylor, over a period of years. Clearly there is a systematic decrease, confirming that energy was being lost. Using Einstein's theory, calculations were made and the observed shrinkage was fully consistent with what theory predicts. This means that there is really no doubt about the existence of gravitational waves; it was only a question of actually detecting them.



*FIGURE X: This figure shows the data obtained by Hulse and Taylor, clinching the argument for the existence of gravitational waves; the evidence, however, is indirect though very strong.*

As I mentioned above, the orbit of the pulsar is decreasing every year. The decrease is very small; during every orbit, the size shrinks by about 3.1 mm. But then this adds up over time and in about three hundred million years, the two members of the binary would collide. That collision would be a mega event, which would sure generate huge celestial gravitational “tsunami”. The kind of gravitational waves that would be generated would be strong enough to be detected by gravitational detectors now under construction.



*FIGURE C: This shows the orbit of the pulsar as it is now; for comparison, the Sun is also depicted. As a result of loss of energy due to relativistic effects, the orbit steadily shrinks, bringing the pulsar closer and closer to its companion. In about 300 million years from now, the two stars forming the binary would collide and maybe merge, generating a “gravitational tsunami”.*

0-0-0

## THE LIGHT TO DISPELL ALL GLOOM

*By late Mr. V. K. Narasimhan*

*Mr. V. K. Narasimhan served as the editor of Sanathana Sarathi, Prasanthi Nilayam ashram's monthly magazine, from 1987 till he passed away in 2000. He was an internationally known journalist and had earlier held the posts of Deputy Editor of The Hindu; and Editor of the Indian Express, Financial Express and Deccan Herald. A man of high intellect, he was well-known and respected as one of the principal leader-writers on Indian politics and economics for over three decades. He was also intimately associated with various socio-welfare organisations in different capacities and has even authored several books. The following article originally appeared in 'Golden Age', a commemorative compilation of tributes to Bhagavan on his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1985.*

As one grows in years, one begins to count one's blessings. And for a man approaching the psalmist's three score and ten, whose life has been crowded with many exciting experiences, spread over many continents, the blessings seem countless. The crowning blessing of them all is the boundless benediction of Sri Sathya Sai Baba in my sixty-fifth year.

I shall reserve for another occasion the story of the circumstances which led to my shifting from New Delhi to Bangalore to write the last chapter of my career as a journalist. There is, as Shakespeare says, "a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will." As one whose faith in the Law of Karma has grown with my experience of the vicissitudes of life, as they have affected individuals, institutions and nations, I cannot get away from the conviction that in some mysterious way, it was Baba who brought me to Bangalore. He would have done that so that I could realise what I had been inwardly seeking all these years, but had not found so far.

### **First Meeting**

From my first meeting with Baba in December 1977, I have experienced a spiritual kinship — a *guru-sishya* (Master-disciple) relationship with Him. I had not experienced this with anybody else, certainly not with the same intensity, or of the same order. I have been familiar in a way with the writings of many great seers and philosophers, from Valmiki and Plato to Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Marx and Gandhi, and each of them, to some extent, has influenced my attitude to life. But after meeting Baba, I have felt that in a unique way, He represents a synthesis of all these teachers and even transcends them by the power of his personality and the universality of His message.

Baba is still too much of a mystery for me. And to attempt describing Him would only be a fragmentary and utterly inadequate description of what He is and what He means to me. The other day, Dr. Bhagavantam, the eminent scientist, described him as "the inexplicable Baba." Many of

the things He does, which have been described as His miracles, are inexplicable in terms of the known laws of science. But to me, the significance of Baba lies not in these supernatural phenomena, but in the innumerable normal activities He does, and in the message He offers to a materially affluent, but morally and spiritually impoverished world.

Increasingly, as a result of my experiences in India and elsewhere, I have come to the conviction that only a powerful spiritual impulse that transforms the mass of mankind from a struggling breed, engaged in the pursuit of personal pelf and power, to a cooperative loving community, which has learnt to divinise every thought and action, can rescue our tortured and divided world from perpetual conflict, fear and suffering.

It may seem that there is nothing new in this view and that it is as old as the Vedas and as recent as Mahatma Gandhi. This is obvious, but what is not so obvious is the fact that the world needs an authentic personality who can generate such a spiritual impulse on a scale wide enough to effect a new spiritual revolution in the history of mankind.

### **A Potent Force of Spiritual Transformation**

I am convinced that by His teachings and His actions, Sri Sathya Sai Baba is today the single most potent force behind such a spiritual transformation. In India itself, I expect that in a few years, the thousands of young men and women who will be going out into the world from the Sathya Sai educational institutions in different parts of the country will be functioning as moral and spiritual catalysts in every sphere where they may be working, bringing a new spirit of dedication and selfless service to their work and elevating the moral tone and quality of life in their respective communities.

The influence which Baba wields over these students is comparable to nothing which any teacher or leader wields over his students or followers. No one who has witnessed the discipline, the devotion and the attitude of reverence displayed by these Sai students can fail to realise that they are bound to become the most significant reforming influences in Indian society, which today is reeking with corruption, indiscipline and immorality. Baba's great work in the educational field seems to me the only hopeful sign in an otherwise heart-breaking and depressing landscape.

The country needs today a new dedicated and morally courageous leadership, not only in politics, but in every walk of life — education, the administration, business and even in religion. People are hungering for such a leadership. Wherefrom can it come except from a source which is utterly unpolluted and unquestionably sacred and spiritual in every sense of the word?

When I see eminent judges, scientists, administrators, educationists, businessmen and even politicians, with their known cynical unconcern for moral scruples, seeking the advice or the blessings of Baba, I feel that He



is a unique transforming force in our country today. When I also see that He has an ever-widening circle of devoted believers in many countries, I realise that His message is not for India alone but for all people everywhere.

There is one reason why Baba, despite the importunities of His non-Indian followers, has deliberately chosen not to go abroad. He has felt that unless India itself is made a real exemplar of the life of the spirit, there is no point in His going abroad to spread His message. In all His discourses Baba has been concerned about the declining morals in India, and the widespread ignorance of the great truths of Indian spirituality and culture. His major concern, in the conduct of His educational institutions and in all His discourses, is to revive faith in the great values proclaimed by Indian sages and avatars, not merely as intellectual concepts but as living truths to be practised in everyday life. For Baba, there is no dichotomy between precept and practice. Again and again, He exhorts all those who come to him to practise at least a tenth of what they learn or profess.

In the cosmic plan, it cannot be an accident that Baba was born in a little-known Andhra village, which has become today a great centre of pilgrimage for spiritual seekers from every part of the world. Last year, when I was at Puttaparthi for the birthday celebrations of Baba, I found that the foreigner seated next to me in the great assembly hall packed with devotees, was a coal miner from Sydney. I asked him how he happened to come to Puttaparthi all the way from Australia and what he found in Baba which he could not find in any other god-man including Christ. He told me that he was an immigrant from Yugoslavia, and that he heard about Baba from a group of Sai devotees in Sydney. While he had read about Christ and others in the Bible and other books, he had found in Baba a living example of the divine in human form.

### **"Nishkama Karma"**

There are many others who have testified to me their experience of the unique personality of Baba. My own experience convinces me that there is a divine purpose in everything He says or does and He transforms everything He touches into something great and noble. I shall conclude with a passage from the address which Baba delivered to the men and women who were engaged in building a dam across the Krishna River. Baba said:

"You have all gathered here from the distant corners of our country, from every State and every linguistic unit, in order to pool your separate skills of hand and head for the successful completion of this great task which will give food and happiness to crores of brothers and sisters for centuries. This is a great chance for all of you, a chance that comes to few, however skilled they might be. It is a rare chance that comes to few in any country. The lake that will fill this gorge with the waters of the Krishna when you build the dam across it will be your *Nishkama karma*

*samudra*, an ocean of selfless effort. You will all see it and feel its coolness, depth and strength. It will gladden you and inspire you, and make you feel that your life has been worthwhile.

"Don't go about this holy work in a haphazard way, without *Sraddha* and *Bhakthi* (sincerity and devotion). You have, by that *Sraddha* and *Bhakthi*, to curb this mighty river, which has carved its way through these hard rocks since the beginning of time, and you have to obstruct its speed and its rage for the benefit of man and beast. Man has by his skill and daring to make this wayward child of Nature halt for a while, and pass on. This task will become lighter if man curbs his own waywardness and his own egoism, anger, malice, envy, greed, and the roaring flood of his passions. Dam them in your own hearts, and canalise them into useful fields. Utilise the force of those qualities to gain better results from your efforts and *Sadhana*. Grow in those fields the fruit of *Shanti* and *Prema* (Peace and Love). That is the agriculture that *Sadhakas* know, and which your own forefathers practised for ages. I have come to remind you of it and to tell you all of the need once again to follow that path."

Jawaharlal Nehru (the first Prime Minister of India) once described the dams, power houses and factories that were being built under the five-year plans as the temples of free India. But he did not realise that it is not the mere erection of these structures in brick and mortar that makes them the temples of "socialist, secular" India. It is the spirit in which they are built and the purposes for which they are used that will endow them with sacredness.

### **The Light That Guides**

And what we have been witnessing all these years is the lack of genuine spirit of dedication and service in the implementation of all our well-meaning schemes. That is why we find ourselves in a situation in which there is so much bitter conflict at all levels, so much of corruption, indiscipline and unscrupulousness in every sphere. Only the recovery of respect for moral values, based upon the conviction that all life should be a consecration to the divine, can rescue the country from the morass in which it has been plunged by three decades of unethical politics and lack of integrity in every sphere of life — education, business, the administration and even in ordinary human relations. It is in this situation that Sri Sathya Sai Baba's life and message are supremely relevant and vital to our country. He is the light that must guide us "amidst the encircling gloom."

## **HARNESSING THE HEART - PART 8**

### ***...LIVING UP TO THE CHALLENGE OF CONSCIENCE IN DAILY LIFE***

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

In our previous issues, we brought you inspiring stories of Mrs. Priya Davis, Mr. Dev Taneja, Mr. C. B. S. Mani, Mr. Karthik Ramesh, Mr. Amar Vivek, Mr. Krish Venkatasubramaniam and Mr. Hiten Morarji.

**In this issue, we have the uplifting story of a wedding planner, Mr. N. Prabhakar from Chennai, India, whose steadfastness to eternal principles of honesty and integrity has made him an exemplar to the modern generation of entrepreneurs. The seamless and effective way in which he married values into his profession and facilitated the weddings of so many couples is as fascinating as it is inspiring. Though a very simple and down-to-earth person, the lessons that everyone can learn from him are profound..**

### **WEDDING VALUES TO THE BUSINESS OF WEDDING -**

#### **The powerful story of Mr. N. Prabhakar as told to Mr. Krish Venkatasubramaniam**

After building a business for over 20 years and having established himself as a successful wedding planner, he decided to quit a few years back. He was only in his mid-forties, but had grown to become contented with the money he had earned. Instead, he wanted to pursue his personal spiritual life. His quest for spirituality was so sincere that he even changed all his phone numbers, including the landline number that he had been using for more than 20 years! And all this was done to just make sure that he stayed completely disassociated from the business.

But his customers just wouldn't allow him to do that. Quite a few of them enquired about his whereabouts and came to his house in person, obviously the disconnection of phone lines failed to dissuade them! And every one of them had only one thing to say. "Please perform just one more wedding – that of my daughter. I am not going to allow you to retire before that!"

Some of them even kept a bundle of currency notes – a considerable amount - on the table before they left, giving this wedding planner no second choice!

He was obviously over whelmed by their love and had to return from his retirement!

This is the story of Mr. N. Prabhakar, from Chennai, in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu, who started his career as an Apprentice with the Simpson Group in 1977, and rose phenomenally to what he is now – a very successful entrepreneur and a philanthropist. And no prize if you have guessed that he is a Sai devotee.

But this account is not about the success of this individual, but about the Power of Values.

When this writer met him at his residence, simplicity was very obvious in his demeanor, his speech, and of course his sparsely furnished home office. One cannot help but notice that when Prabhakar talks about his core strength, he is very confident. In a powerful tone, he confides, "Honesty is my greatest strength, which I imbibed from my father. My father taught me 'Just practice this one thing – be honest. Do not lie under any circumstance.'"

And he explains that in a simple way. He says that if one does not lie, he would always hesitate to do anything that is evil. This is because he will accept his fault if the situation ever warranted him to. But, if a person has the habit of lying, he would not hesitate to do any evil act, since he would anyhow bury it under a bundle of lies, one after the other!

One of his brochures has the title "Know Our Specialties" and lists 11 specialties. The very first one says "Truth and Honesty Are Our Watchwords"! And the fact that his clients have forced him to cancel his retirement reiterates that these are not just fanciful words printed to promote his business.

### **The Ideals of Punctuality and Efficiency**

Prabhakar started his career in Addison Tools Ltd., a Simpson Group Company, in Chennai. He joined as a Commercial Apprentice in 1977 drawing a salary of Rs.130 per month. Yes, you read it right – a hundred and thirty rupees or an approximate equivalent of US \$30 per month! Those days, Commercial Apprentices were not confirmed as per the usual employment contracts since the company's Managing Director had sent a circular to all managers that no Commercial Apprentices would be confirmed. He had further said that no recommendations for the same should be sent to him.

But Prabhakar's manager literally fought against this rule. So much so that the management made an exception to this rule and Prabhakar was taken in as a full time employee!

When the writer quizzed him as to what really made the Manager fight for his cause, he says, "I worked for Addison Tools for 11 years and not a single day I was late to office. Only on one occasion, that too when I cancelled a pre-approved leave, I went late by 2 minutes!

"Also, the other apprentices were deliberately slow in their work, to avoid being dumped with more work. But I used to complete any given task on time and was always ready to do any additional assignment given to me," he says.

When Prabhakar resigned from this job to kick start his wedding planning venture, his Manager, Mr. P.S. Narayanan had told him that he would entrust his daughter's wedding only to him. Three years later, the manager still remembered that and as promised went on to entrust his daughter's wedding planning to Prabhakar! During this wedding, Prabhakar had requested Mr. Narayanan to appoint his representative to have a count of the number of people, to ensure mutual satisfaction of the accuracy of the billing, since the final billing was based on the actual number of people attending the wedding. For this, the Manager had replied, "I am going to entrust this work to my representative, an honest and reliable person and that is you!"

The staff at Addison used to contribute a fixed monthly amount from their salary into a common pool to fund their outstation tours. Prabhakar was usually given the task of visiting the places a few weeks before so that they got a feel of the place and its facilities, and to also book the accommodation in advance. Prabhakar always spent his personal money for these trips and was transparent in accounting for all money that was passed through him.

Little did he know at that time that these colleagues would later entrust their family weddings to him just for this transparency and honesty.

### **Accept Your Faults – That's a Strength!**

Prabhakar confided that the second wedding assignment that he took up in 1989 proved to be a test of his strength. Due to his inexperience and the fault of his cook on whom he had heavily depended, there was a shortage of some items for the last batch of guests during lunch. The client was upset and lost his confidence in Prabhakar. "I just accepted my fault and did not try to hide behind excuses," says Prabhakar.

The customer told him, "You cannot manage the reception in the evening. So, I will better arrange for food from a hotel." Prabhakar accepted this humbly. But no hotel could provide it in such short notice and the customer had to come back to him. "Can you somehow do it?" he asked.

For the reception, one of the key items was the vegetarian *pulav*, for which basmati rice is generally used. But the Chief Cook had told him that he would manage with the ordinary rice, and hence basmati rice was not purchased.

When the customer asked Prabhakar about the rice used, he told the truth that basmati rice was not used in the preparation. Incidentally, the cook happened to come that way and the customer casually asked the same question to him too. "Yes. We have made sufficient preparation with basmati rice." The chief cook lied. The customer then realized that his wedding planner was honest even if he was inexperienced.

It was 4 pm and was already too late since preparations for the evening feast had begun as early as 11 in the morning. Prabhakar's face brightens up as he recollects that all items were ready by 6.30 pm in spite of the huge delay! "A real miracle", says Prabhakar, "something which only God could have accomplished!" A reward for being honest!

#### **400 Not Out!**

"And since then, I have not turned back or failed in the last 20 years. I have been performing wedding, one after another, and the number has now touched 400. Some of my friends jokingly call me *Nithya Kalyana Perumal*, the Hindu God who is believed to bless the unmarried with marital bliss.

Even when he had started the venture, he was not willing to promote himself in any dishonest manner. A very difficult proposition since any prospective customer would invariably first ask him 'How many weddings have you performed?' But it came as a pleasant surprise when he heard his first customer tell him with excitement "We have heard a lot about you"! Not only that, the customer was even ready to assign the task to Prabhakar! Prabhakar still wonders what and from where they 'heard a lot' about him!

#### **Always Speak Obligingly**

"One trait which is very crucial for success, especially in this business is to 'speak obligingly' as Swami says," explains Prabhakar. He recollects how a particular customer had been very unreasonable in his demands during a wedding. "But I was patient with him. Even though I could not oblige to whatever he demanded, I followed Swami's message 'You need not always oblige, but you can speak obligingly.'"

"And after that event, the same person recommended me to his acquaintances on many occasions," amuses Prabhakar.

#### **The Importance of Professionalism**

"Along with honesty, I have also built in lots of systems and procedures to ensure utmost efficiency in whatever we do and that is very crucial," warns Prabhakar. Over the years, I have built templates, using which we methodically know the sequence of the events, akin to a professional project management.

"We have a chronological list of activities to be focused right from several weeks before the actual wedding. We have a check list of all the things to be taken to the wedding premises. We know what to buy, in what quantities, their proportions, etc. thoroughly - everything that is needed for breakfast, lunch and dinner."

This writer confirms that he has not obtained a Diploma in Hotel Management. And, it is only in recent years, that he has learnt the art of cooking!

**"Good Corporate Governance is a necessary condition, but it is not a substitute for performance. You still have to go out into the market and make customers happy."**

**Mr. Narayanamurthy, Infosys**

### **The Inter-weaving of Business and Spirituality**

"For me, Business and Spirituality is closely inter-woven. While I apply the spiritual principles to my business, my business has indirectly brought me to Swami," says Prabhakar.

His earlier partner, a devotee of Bhagavan Baba had invited him to their house for *bhajans*, many years back. The Sai *bhajans* mesmerized Prabhakar and he was drawn into the lap of Swami!

He says that every single time he starts his work by surrendering to Swami 'It is not me, but You who is performing this event'. But in spite of all earnest intentions and systems, there are situations that go beyond his control.

On at least three occasions, he remembers, while the family had estimated about 300 people to attend more than 600 had actually attended. On each of these days, there was sufficient quantity of every single item! 'I just don't know how that was possible!' he says with wonder and joy.

Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, looked up toward heaven, and asked God's blessing on the food. Breaking the loaves into pieces, he kept giving the Bread and the Fish to the disciples to give to the people.

They all ate as much as they wanted, and they picked up twelve baskets of left overs!"  
Luke: 9:16 & 9.17

"I always prepare sufficient quantity of food for the number of people agreed upon as per the contract and I don't try to make hidden profits by cooking less and stretching it," he says. "In turn, God helps me out from difficult situations like the above."

### **Listening to God's Voice**

"I always start with a prayer and never rely just on my own intelligence alone. I always pray, 'I don't know anything. I just want to be honest and do good deeds. You control my thought process and make me do what YOU want me

to do'. He helps me by giving the right intuition," says Prabhakar, narrating an interesting incident that happened.

He had a wedding to be performed on 23 May, 1991. The place was booked by the customer only from 22<sup>nd</sup> afternoon. But some intuition made him request the bride's father to take the premise from the 22<sup>nd</sup> morning itself. And all his staff and the items reached the premise on the night of 21<sup>st</sup>.

On 21<sup>st</sup> midnight, the then Prime Minister of India, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, was assassinated. And because of this national tragedy all the shops and establishments had closed their shutters the next day. No public transportation was available and because of the tension prevailing then even private vehicles were not plying on the road. The groom was brought in a 'Luna' (a tiny 2 wheeler), the *Nadaswaram* (auspicious music) was played mildly from the kitchen to respect the public sentiment, and the wedding went on as planned, while all nuptials in the surrounding areas were cancelled!

"It was not me who did it. It was Him," asserts Prabhakar.

### **Threat of Severe Consequences!**

Once, a retired Colonel from Saugor, Uttar Pradesh, had approached him for his daughter's wedding that was to be conducted in Chennai. During the initial discussions he asked the wedding planner 'How do I know that you would perform this wedding well?' Prabhakar had replied that he would give the references of some people for whom he had coordinated weddings earlier. The colonel had refused saying that this way Prabhakar would give the references of only those contacts who he was sure would give only a positive feedback!

The Colonel then said that he would give the assignment to him but warned him that "If you are dishonest or don't keep up your word, I'll punish you severely, and I'll do this even to my son, if he does not stick to principles!"

The wedding went on well and the Colonel, used to the discipline of the Army, in the end appreciated his meticulous planning and organisation. A man who had almost threatened him had now placed him on a high pedestal!

Prabhakar says that his only intention before any wedding is to do it exceedingly well and not to maximize profit. "But money automatically comes," he says. "When the intention is good, the outcome will only be good." And when he says this you cannot miss the confidence on his face.

### **Share to Multiply**

He believes strongly that when you share, you get back more. And this, he has been doing in two ways:

He has transferred his knowledge about the business to quite a few people, who have successfully launched their own projects. He does not hesitate or



feel insecure in sharing the 'secret' to anybody who has a good intention of building wealth through fair means.

The second is charity. A few years into this business, he and his partner decided to compulsorily spend a percentage of the profits on charitable causes. And they experienced that the more they gave, the more they got back. Though they did it without expecting anything in return, their business and the profits grew by leaps and bounds!

This is the real life tale of a self-made multi-millionaire, who never forgot to hear his true Self - his conscience, and in the process not only found prosperity but also has become an inspiration to many. Who says one cannot be successful in the present world if he or she strictly adheres to principles? If we look around, they surely would be many such Prabhakars who light up both others lives and their own. It is because of Prabhakar and the likes of him that the world is still such a beautiful place.

*Dear reader, if you know of any such inspiring personality, please do share the story with us and we would only be too happy to feature it in this section of Heart2Heart. After all, what is heart2Heart without tales of love, inspiration, values and compassion? You can write to us at [h2h@radiosai.org](mailto:h2h@radiosai.org).*

**SERIAL ARTICLES**

**SHIRDI SAI PARTHI SAI**

Part - 43

*(Continued from the previous issue)*

**ACT XVII - SCENE 1**

SESHAMA: Suseela, can you please get me some water?

SUSEELA: Yes I will. But tell me did you write to your father and mother?

SESHAMA: Well, I have sent a messenger immediately. But I am still not able to decide whether Sathyam's behaviour is due to immaturity or mental imbalance.

SUSEELA: Why should we think that way? Why can't it be the will of Providence? If there is no Divinity in Him, then how can we explain the *Vibhuti* and all those other articles that He materializes? And why will so many people offer *Aarathi* to Sathyam? Look at it this way- ants gather only where there is jaggery and similarly devotees flock only where there is Divinity!

SESHAMA: What Divinity and what devotees are you talking about?! I don't see any. No matter how many times I call Him back home, He refuses to come. When father and mother arrive and we hand Him over to them, our responsibility would be over.

SUSEELA: When I take food to him, He says, "Offer it as *Naivedyam* [sacred offering] to God." To the devotees, He says, "Perform worship on Thursdays". We just don't know what Sathyam will do till mother-in-law and father-in-law come.

SESHAMA: Well, I guess we will have to wait and see.

**SCENE 2**

ANJANEYULU: Rama Rao, you must take very good photos of Sathyam. They must be terrific!

RAMA RAO: Anjaneyulu, it is your good fortune that Sathyam is in your garden; and it is my good fortune to be able to photograph Him. Just watch, I will take a great picture!

ANJANEYULU: OK, go ahead.

RAMA RAO: Anjaneyulu, remove that small stone in front of the boy.

SATHYA: No; leave the stone where it is; it must appear in the picture.

ANJANEYULU: OK.

RAMA RAO: Smile please!

### SCENE 3

KONDAMA: What is it that you are reading with so much agitation? Is it a letter from Seshama?

VENKAMA RAJU: Yes, father.

EASWARAMMA: What's the matter? Has something happened again to Sathyam?

VENKAMA: Easwari, don't get agitated. You know about our Sathyam; His behaviour has once again turned peculiar.

EASWARAMMA: That is why I am asking you. What has happened now?

VENKAMA: Seshama says that the other day, Sathyam suddenly declared that He would not attend school anymore. And that He does not need any further studies and has no bonds. Sathyam said that He has a lot of work to do, and that He is SAI!

EASWARAMMA: What is Seshama doing about all this?

VENKAMA: What can Seshama do? Sathyam does not listen to either his word or threat. Instead of staying in His elder brother's house, Sathyam has established Himself in Anjaneyulu's garden, and is performing *Bhajans* there!

EASWARAMMA: Father-in-law, we must immediately go to Uravakonda and see what has happened to Sathyam.

VENKAMA: This Sathyam's affair is very perplexing; I cannot make out anything from all this.

KONDAMA: Listen Venkama, our perception is very limited. Whatever happens is the Will of God. People study in order to earn wealth but my grandson is renouncing worldly education in favour of Higher Realms. While others are in quest of worldly happiness, my grandson is after the Wealth of Spiritual Wisdom. Sathyam, the lamp of our family, will illumine the whole world. OK, if you wish, go and bring Sathyam back to Puttaparthi.

VENKAMA: Sambamurthi!

SAMBA: Sir?

VENKAMA: Please inform Seshama that we are on our way.

SAMBA: Will do so at once, sir.

SCENE 4

ANJANEYULU: My dear boy, I have brought *Prasaadam* for You. Today is Thursday. Since morning You have had nothing, except a little milk. Kindly partake of this *Prasaadam*.

**SATHYA:** Is it *Naivedyam* [a sacred offering] or *Prasaadam* [remnant of a sacred offering]?

ANJANEYULU: For You, it is *Naivedyam*, and for us it is *Prasaadam*! Pray accept.

**SATHYA:** The leaf is full of food but every morsel of it has the taste of the whole. The ocean is full of water but every drop of it has the same quality as the entire ocean. In the same way, every man has all the qualities of God. Everything we eat is the gift of God.

ANJANEYULU: It is so wonderful to listen to Your words! They bring fulfilment to our lives. It is due to the merit earned in earlier lives that we are able to have the proximity of a Noble One like You!

**SATHYA:** Here, I have touched this *Naivedyam* with My hand; take it now as *Prasaadam*.

ANJANEYULU: This was specially made for You. Please have at least a tiny bit.

**SATHYA:** People say, "This was harvested in my field," "I have cooked it," and so on. You are a spark of the Divine. Everything is God – the field, the crop, and every happening, including harvesting and cooking. God harvests, God cooks, and God is also the One Who tastes. The word "I" is the sure sign of ego. If you give it up, it is equal to giving up the whole world!

This tastes good. Do you know what is in it?

ANJANEYULU: I do not know.

**SATHYA:** Taste! The Divine is hidden in the devotee, in the same way taste is hidden in the pudding.

ANJANEYULU: Ah, blessed are we!

RAMA RAO: Anjananeyulu, did you see this great wonder! There is an idol of Shirdi Baba in the photo, in place of this stone!

ANJANEYULU: My God! How did Shirdi Baba appear?

RAMA RAO: Remember I wanted the stone removed and the young Swami did not permit it? Now do you see the miracle!

ANJANEYULU: What a wonder! We did not know that Shirdi Baba was in the stone! Devotees! Look here! In this photo taken yesterday by Rama Rao, this stone is seen as an idol of Shirdi Baba!

**SATHYA:** There, *Maya* is coming! Everything is an illusion. Who is what to whom? To Me, all are one.

EASWARAMMA: Sathyam, what kind of words are these? What are these ceremonies and *Bhajans*? My boy, I am unable to understand Your behaviour! What's all this?

**SATHYA:** The path of devotion and love to the Highest Realm. If understood, it is the easiest!

EASWARAMMA: What's all this philosophy?

**SATHYA:** This is not dry philosophy but the highest Truth!

EASWARAMMA: I don't understand all this. I know only one thing and that is my love for my child. My boy, understand the heart of this mother and know the pain it is suffering.

**SATHYA:** Take a look at this idol.

EASWARAMMA: Do you see Shirdi Baba next to Sathyam?

VENKAMA: How did Babaji come here? It is most surprising.

**SATHYA:** God is everywhere! It is our duty to realise that.

EASWARAMMA: What are You saying? ....What is this boy saying?

VENKAMA: Sathyam, I am not able to understand Your feelings. You say that You are on Your way to becoming the beacon to those in quest of the nobler purpose of life. What is all this?

EASWARAMMA: Boy, this is not good at this age. And do not belie the dreams of Your parents.

VENKAMA: Are You trying to become a renunciate in Your childhood? Before You save the world, You must first help Your mother who gave birth to You, Your father who brought You up, and other elders who have strained for Your welfare. That is Your *Dharma*, and don't forget that! Listen to me! Change Your decision!!

EASWARAMMA: Sathyam my boy, we don't know what's in Your mind. Come at once to Your brother's house, and explain to us in a manner we can understand about what is in Your mind. We must know what You want to do,

right? Look my boy, listen to my words. Sathyam, don't refuse this wish of Your mother.

## SCENE 5

SESHAMA: Mother, father! I am the eldest son of the family. All of us thought that the younger son Sathyam would receive English education and secure a Government job. We have worked very hard towards that end but with no result. His path seems to be different. Instead of being in the world, He is aspiring to be spiritual. Instead of the body, He loves the *Atma*. Divinity and meditation are His very breath. He says He is God. He says that He has no earthly bondage and that He will go wherever He wants. That is why I sent for you both, and asked you to come immediately. Please put some sense into Him.

VENKAMA: Seshama, that stage has passed. I don't think that Sathyam, who wants to reach out to the wide world, will listen to our words. Maybe she can try.....

EASWARAMMA: Whether He listens or not, it is our duty to try. Suseela dear, please get some food.

SUSEELA: Yes mother-in-law.

SUSEELA: Here, mother-in-law.

EASWARAMMA: Sathyam my boy, please accept three handfuls of food from Your mother's hand.

**SATHYA:** Illusion, illusion!

SESHAMA: Mother, he is calling you illusion!

**SATHYA:** No more bondage; illusion is gone, illusion is gone!

EASWARAMMA: What bondage, what freedom? Is it for declaring that I gave You three handfuls of food? My boy Sathyam, what's all this? Maybe we are in illusion and we are ourselves illusion, but You are beyond illusion. Therefore my boy, we will not come in Your way. We will not argue either. But don't go away from us to some cave, or to the Himalayas. Sathyam my boy, promise Your mother that You will stay in Puttaparthi. Let Your devotees come there, and I will gladly receive them.

**SATHYA:** I have chosen Puttaparthi as My arena. I am granting this wish not only to you, but to the village of Puttaparthi and to whole world.

VENKAMA: Seshama, make arrangements for our return. We will go back tomorrow itself, before He changes His mind! We will take Him to Puttaparthi.

EASWARAMMA: My boy's mind does not change. True to His name, He will always speak the Truth.

END OF SCENE 5

*(To be continued)*

**MUSINGS ON AVATARS**  
**Part 5**  
**(Continued from the previous issue)**

*By Prof. G. Venkataraman*

*Dear Readers, for 40 previous issues – from October 2004 to February 2008 - we brought you a spiritual feast in the form of the "Gita for Children" in a serialized form. Prior to that, we had started our first series entitled "Shirdi Sai – Parthi Sai" which is continuing till date. The "Gita for Children" series was taken from the book "Krishna - Arjuna Dialogue" authored by Prof. Venkataraman. As we concluded the final segment of this book in February 2008 issue, from March 2008, we started a new series on "Avatars" or Divine Incarnations. The articles in this series are actually adaptations of talks delivered recently on Radio Sai by Prof. G. Venkataraman, and are based on the book "Message of the Lord" authored by him a few years earlier. We hope H2H readers will relish the spiritual insights this series offers.*

**The Story of Krishna - continued**

Loving Sai Ram and greetings from Prashanti Nilayam. We resume this journey through the Avatars, by continuing from where I left last time. If you recall, I was telling you about the early years of the Krishna Avatar.

**Lord Krishna Despatches Several Demons**

Years rolled by and Krishna grew into adulthood. Numerous were His experiences, but His encounters with the evil ones did not cease. One of those with whom He had frequent brushes was Jarasanda, the father-in-law of Kamsa. Enraged that Krishna had made his two daughters who were married to Kamsa into widows, Jarasanda repeatedly attacked Mathura where Krishna had established Himself. As many as eighteen invasions were attempted, and this led Krishna to create far away on the western coast, a new city called Dwaraka. Once Dwaraka was ready, Krishna instantly transported all His people from Mathura to Dwaraka by the use of His Yogic powers. Eventually, Krishna used Bhima as His instrument for killing Jarasanda. By the way, the Dwaraka of today is a town created later in history; the Dwaraka of Krishna is supposed to have gone under the sea a long time ago. Recently, underwater explorations off the sea coast of Gujarat revealed what seemed like ruins of an ancient town. Maybe those are the remains of the Dwaraka of Krishna; however, more work is needed to confirm that.

A parenthetical remark here about the mysterious ways of the Lord is also in order. You might legitimately wonder why, if Krishna was indeed the Lord of the Universe, did He put up with eighteen invasions of Mathura by Jarasanda? Why did He, who used His Yogic powers to transport all the people of Mathura to Dwaraka in an instant, have to use Bhima to get rid of Jarasanda? We will never know! As Swami says, God's actions can never be



understood; He moves in mysterious ways and performs His wonders - that is all! Indeed, this is true of the current Avatar as well.

One day, after the Pandavas had established themselves at Indraprastha (that story will come later), Yudhishtira decided that the most auspicious *Rajasuya Yajna* should be performed. Invitations were sent to all leading kings, princes and chieftains, and there was an overwhelming response. At the conclusion of the rites, homage had to be paid to the foremost among the guests gathered and the question was who should be so honoured? The name of Krishna came up and Yudhishtira jumped at the idea. However, the idea did not find favour with many and Sishupala, until recently the commander-in-chief of Jarasanda's forces, rose not only to make his objection but also hurl abuse at Krishna. The latter did not react but merely kept on smiling because He had given His word to Sishupala's mother that He would put up with insults - up to a point that is. Seeing Krishna smile made Sishupala even more furious and the abuse now poured out in a torrent.

Eventually Krishna decided that Sishupala had exceeded all decent limits (including in the number of abuses hurled) and that He was no longer bound by the pledge given to the misguided one's mother. Calmly He beheaded Sishupala. (Tradition has it that Krishna launched His Divine *Chakra* or discus, but Swami has clarified that Krishna merely flung a plate He was holding and that acting like a spinning wheel, cut Sishupala's head off). And lo and behold! A glow left Sishupala's body, flew towards Krishna and merged with His Feet.

Yudhishtira, who was a witness, was both amazed as well as dismayed. How could such an evil one obtain merger? Seeing his confusion, Narada who was among those present, drew Yudhishtira aside and quickly narrated the entire history of Jayan and Vijayan and their indiscretion. He added, "This Sishupala is none other than Jayan reborn. No doubt he hated Krishna but he was always thinking of Him. Curiously and strange as it might sound, one who constantly hates the Lord is also a *Yogi*. Obviously, practice of this kind of *Yoga* is very rare; and it is the practice of that *Yoga* that gave Sishupala his liberation; needless to say, this type of *Yoga* is not recommended!"

Narada continued, "With Jayan gone, Krishna would now have to tackle Vijayan, that is Dantavakra, and that day was not far off. Meanwhile, do you realise, O Yudhishtira, that this Krishna with whom you and your brothers move so freely and casually is none other than Narayana Himself and that this sort of privilege is not available even to those who have spent long periods in *Tapas* (penance)?" That in brief is what Sage Narada told Yudhishtira.

Shortly after the extermination of Sishupala, Dantavakra, the incarnation of Vijayan, also met his end at the hands of Krishna, precisely as Narada had foretold Yudhishtira. One would have thought that with "mission accomplished" Narayana would have returned to His base; no, He did not. For, there was a much greater job awaiting Him, namely the proclamation of His Divine and Eternal Message.

Krishna now became increasingly involved with the Pandavas and their affairs, and I shall be describing that in detail soon. For the moment it suffices to say that after the great Kurukshetra war, Krishna ruled for many years in Dwaraka.

### **Lord Krishna's *Sneha Bhava* (divine friendship) for Sudhama**

Once during this period, there came one day to the court of Krishna, a Brahmin named Sudhama (also known as Kuchela). Sudhama and Krishna had studied together in the *Gurukulam* (school) of Sandipani but later their ways parted; while Krishna became a ruler, Sudhama lived in poverty. One day his wife persuaded Sudhama to go to Dwaraka, call on Krishna and seek some help. For a variety of reasons, Sudhama was most reluctant to do so, but finally had to yield to the pressure of his wife. Hesitantly he started his journey to Dwaraka, but just before he set out he told himself: "I don't know if Krishna would recognise me; after all, He is a big ruler whereas I am only a poor Brahmin. But anyway, if He is still like He once used to be, then I should take for Him some puffed rice for He used to love it so much in those days. True, it is a trivial gift to offer to a King but then I am poor, and in fact I am going there precisely for begging!" Thus excusing himself, Sudhama took with him a small bundle of puffed rice to be given as a humble offering.

Sudhama slowly trudged to Dwaraka and, after successfully negotiating various royal guards, eventually made it to Krishna's presence. This was the moment of trial - would the great Krishna recognise him or throw him out? What actually happened was something that Sudhama was totally unprepared for. Krishna not only rushed to welcome Sudhama and fold him in a tight embrace, but he extended all the traditional honours due to a guest, including the washing of the feet! And then came the fond reminiscences – "O Sudhama, do you remember" "O Krishna, do you remember" – that sort of thing that happens when old friends meet after a very long time. This went on for a while and Sudhama cleanly forgot about the "gift" he had brought; but would the compassionate Lord let a slip like that happen? So suddenly, Krishna took hold of the bundle containing the puffed rice and said, "O Sudhama, how could you have forgotten to give Me the loving gift sent by My sister (Sudhama's wife)?!" So saying, He took the puffed rice and not only ate it by the handful, but shared it also with His consort Rukmini. Sudhama was thoroughly overwhelmed and choked with emotion.

Soon it was time to say goodbye, and after a tender leave-taking, Sudhama left for his village. Only much later did he realise with a start that he had completely forgotten to ask Krishna for help. Now what on earth was he going to tell his wife? She would be hopping mad for having blown away the opportunity of a lifetime. Wondering how he would negotiate the storm waiting for him at home, he returned feeling sad. But when he approached his house, a strange sight greeted him. In the place where his pathetic hut once stood, there now was a great mansion; and as he entered, his wife greeted him with huge smiles, draped in jewellery and the costliest of clothes.

Sudhama quietly reflected: "Krishna certainly knew about my wants. He gave me an opportunity to give expression to them but I, swept by Him in all respects, spent my time in adoration totally forgetting my wants. That, I suppose is what *Bhakti* or devotion is all about; and of course, Krishna cares only for *Bhakti*; even the most insignificant offering of a *Bhakta* or devotee is to Him a great thing! For Him, a *Bhakta* comes above everything else and once a *Bhakta* wins a place in His heart, he does not even have to ask; every need of his is taken care of, as if automatically." Realising the profound significance of the fortune that had befallen him, Sudhama advised his wife not to be swept by the worldly aspect of Krishna's largesse but pay more attention to the Divine Grace received. Thus, Sudhama and his family, though now affluent, spent all their time thinking of Krishna. And his story became an eternal example of how the Lord cares not for the material value of what is offered to Him, but for the feeling with which the offering is made. (It is pertinent in this context, to mention in passing an incident recounted in one edition of the *Sanathana Sarathi*, about a young boy who gave a small contribution to the hospital fund from the money he had saved, and how Swami declared that contribution to be more valuable than a million dollars!)

Years went rolling by and up in *Vaikuntam*, everyone was beginning to feel the prolonged absence of Narayana (rather like what the inhabitants of Puttaparthi feel when Swami is away for an extended period as He sometimes is). On behalf of the pining celestial denizens, Brahma came down along with the *Devas* to make a plea to Krishna. He said, "O Lord, You incarnated to destroy the human forms of Jayan and Vijayan. That was accomplished a long time ago. You then stayed on to give Arjuna (and humanity) Your priceless jewel, the *Bhagavad Gita*. Is it not time now for You to return to *Vaikuntam*? Please do so immediately, for without You we are so lonely."

Krishna smiled and replied, "True, I have done all that you have said but there is still one more massive task left. My own clansmen, the Yadavas, have, over the years, become lustful, conceited and arrogant. Right now I am exercising control over them, which is why they have not wrought as much havoc as they are capable of. Once I depart, they would go on the rampage, which is unacceptable. So I have to take care of the Yadava problem before I return. But be not anxious for soon I would be back."

### **Uddhava Elicits Lord Krishna's Final Glorious Teaching**

Krishna is Love personified, and it was His Love for Arjuna (and humanity as a whole) that made Him give the glorious and timeless message. Understandably, the Gita is truly famous but Arjuna was not the only one to be favoured with direct Divine teaching; there was another equally fortunate, namely Uddhava.

Uddhava was one of the Yadavas who was deeply devoted to Krishna. Shortly before the curtain was to be rung down, Krishna acknowledged Uddhava's devotion or *Bhakti* by favouring him with special advice, sometimes

referred to as the *Uddhava Gita*. Unlike the dialogue with Arjuna that was severely curtailed by the impending battle, Krishna's conversation with Uddhava was more relaxed. Uddhava wanted to know many things and Krishna patiently obliged.

The Lord said, "Uddhava, I am pleased with your spiritual thirst. Let Me quench it with some advice. First, I shall briefly recall what Dattatreya told my ancestor Yadu. In his wanderings, Yadu came across Dattatreya, around whom there was the aura or glow of inner peace. When asked about the secret, Dattatreya replied,

"O King, Nature is the best teacher. My teachers have been the earth, the sky, water, the Moon, the Sun, a pigeon, a python, the ocean, a moth, the honey-bee, the keeper of a beehive, an elephant, a deer, a fish, a woman named Pingala, a squirrel-like animal called Kurari, a child, a young girl, an archer, a snake, a spider and a wasp."

Seeing the puzzled look on Yadu's face, Dattatreya continued, "I shall explain myself with a few examples.

- I saw that the earth bears all loads silently. This taught me forbearance and the need for being firm like a mountain.
- Next the sky. When the sky is overcast, we think it is covered with clouds; but that is not true because there is no contact between the clouds and the sky. From this I learnt that though the *Atma* is enclosed in a body which is made up of the five elements, it (the *Atma*) is not involved with the body; in other words, the Brahman is always apart from His manifestation.
- The water of a river is pure and sweet and it purifies those who come to it. In the same manner, good men serve to purify humanity with their presence (*Darshan*), their touch (*Sparshan*) and words (*Sambhashan*).
- What about the python? As you know, the python never goes out of its way to obtain food; it is content to eat whatever comes its way, be it big or small. Sometimes it even starves for days together but it always waits patiently. This taught me that man should accept with fortitude whatever life offers, be it favourable or otherwise.
- The moth, as you know, is attracted by flame to which it later falls a prey. It is a victim of the sense of sight which beguiles it. From this, I learnt that unless a person controlled his senses, he runs the danger of being destroyed.
- Turning to the bee, I noticed that it does not hurt the flower it sucks nectar from. Also, it does not take more than just a small amount. Even so, a renunciate or *Sannyasi* must accept from a householder just so much and no more.
- Next the Kurari. Once it had a piece of meat. Large birds then surrounded the Kurari and attacked it fiercely. The Kurari suffered much and could not ward

off the attackers. Finally, it let go the piece of meat and instantly the attack stopped. To me this was a lesson that renunciation leads to peace.

- The snake avoids company and lives by itself in a hole in the ground. Likewise, a renunciate or *Sannyasi* should shun company and live by himself in a secluded cave or hermitage.
- The spider taught me the final lesson. One day I was watching this spider sitting on a branch. Suddenly he spat saliva and began to weave threads, which he made into a nice web. Later he ate the threads and soon nothing was left of the web. Even so, at the beginning of an aeon or *Kalpa*, *Paramatma* or the Supreme Lord manifests Himself as the phenomenal Universe which, later at the end of the *Kalpa*, He withdraws into Himself."

"This, O King", Dattatreya concluded, "should give you some idea of how to learn from Nature, shape your life and derive inner peace."

Krishna then said to Uddhava, "See Uddhava, everywhere there are lessons to learn from. These lessons would become apparent only if you train yourself to look beneath the surface and search for a meaning. Creation is beautiful but don't be dazzled by it for that is what *Maya* (illusion) is all about. Look beyond and you will see the Creator who is much grander!

*[Speaking in a similar vein during His Divine Discourse delivered on February 13, 1997, during the first-ever celebration of the Chinese New Year at Prasanthi Nilayam, Bhagavan Baba described the lessons one could learn from the cow, the snake, the donkey, the dog and the parrot.]*

Starting thus, Krishna in essence repeated to Uddhava the teaching He had earlier imparted to Arjuna. Uddhava listened intently as Arjuna had done before, and asked many questions. Finally, he said, "Krishna, this *Bhakti* (devotion) seems to be most wonderful. Please tell me more about *Bhakti* and Your *Bhaktas* (devotees)." Smiling broadly Krishna said, "Uddhava, you certainly seem to know what I like best!" and then went on to expound the greatness of *Bhakti* as well as how He adores His devotees.

Uddhava then asked, "Krishna, can you please describe Your *Bhakta*?" Krishna replied, "Gladly. My *Bhakta* is easily recognised by his compassionate nature and the softness of his heart. He loves to talk about Me and sing My praise. He never eats or drinks anything without first offering it to Me. If other *Bhaktas* are talking about Me, he pricks up his ears. As he goes about his work, his body functions like a robot while his mind is totally absorbed in Me. For him, nothing else exists in the Universe except Me, and wherever he turns, he sees nothing other than Me. Tears of joy come to his eyes when he thinks of Me, indeed even when he merely hears My name! A *Bhakta* is mad about Me, but believe Me Uddhava, God-madness is better than anything else you can think of. And let Me tell you one more thing. To Me, My *Bhakta* is more precious than anything in this world. I don't mind or care if people insult or abuse Me, but take it from Me that I shall not tolerate in the least bit any calculated injury to My dear devotee."

Uddhava was the last one to receive the benefit of Krishna's Divine teachings. He was then sent by Krishna to Badri Ashram on the banks of the Ganges to meditate and spend the rest of his life. With Uddhava gone, Krishna could now attend to the remaining unfinished business, namely the elimination of the Yadava clan.

### **The Yadava Clan Attract a Terrible Curse**

Being the masterly playwright that He is, the Lord had already scripted the destruction of the Yadavas and His own exit as well! Much earlier, Krishna once created an urge in some great sages to visit Him. Thus, it was that a group led by Sage Vishwamitra made a pilgrimage, which included a visit to Dwaraka. As they entered the palace gates at Dwaraka to pay their homage to Krishna, a group of Yadava boys decided to play a prank. They dressed a young lad as a girl and taking him before the sages asked, "O Wise Ones, this girl is with child. Will she give birth to a boy or a girl?"

The Rishis saw through the game and pronounced a curse, "An iron pestle would be born which later would be the cause of destruction of the entire Yadava community." Intensely scared, the pranksters fled from the place. Later, when the female disguise was removed, an iron pestle was found in the garment. The elders who came to know of the incident were alarmed and ordered that the pestle be ground into fine powder and the dust thrown into the sea. This was duly done but one sharp piece of the pestle remained which could not be powdered; however, that too was flung into the sea. The Yadavas now breathed easier, confident that they had circumvented the curse. It was not as if the Rishis had spontaneously pronounced the curse; rather, the Lord had willed that they do so as a part of His Master Plan. Could that be thwarted so easily?

The iron powder scattered into the sea was washed ashore where it sprouted as reeds which grew tall, waiting to play their role when the time came. And that came thirty-six years after the Kurukshetra war when one day Krishna summoned all the Yadavas and said, "Lately, many evil omens have been appearing. We must therefore pray, practice austerities and offer sacrifices. I suggest we all go out of Dwaraka for this purpose. The women and children may go to the nearby spot of Sangotra, whereas we might proceed further to Prabhasa on the sea coast." Soon after, the male members, led by Krishna and Balarama reached Prabhasa for performing the various rites. One day, along with the meal, the Yadavas partook rather generously of wine. In no time at all they became intoxicated, and friendly arguments transformed into quarrels and later into physical fights. Looking for weapons to use, they saw the tall reeds that were as strong as iron rods. Everyone grabbed the reeds and soon the Yadavas were smashing each other to death.

It was a gory sight but standing quite aloof, Krishna watched it silently; after all, was it not a part of His play? Balarama too watched from a distance but unlike Krishna, he was totally disgusted. Silently he walked away to shed his mortal coil. In the end, the Yadavas were all dead and only Krishna was left. It

was now His turn to go and He had scripted his own exit too! But before I get on to that, there is something I must mention.

In my next talk, I shall tell you something about the Kurukshetra war at the commencement of which the *Bhagavad Gita* was given by the Lord to humanity. But here I would like to state the following: Soon after the Kurukshetra war, Krishna went to Hastinapura to console Dhritarashtra and Gandhari, the bereaved parents whose sons had all died in the war. The latter was fully aware that her sons were unadulterated evil but even so, as a mother who had lost all her sons, she would not be consoled. To Krishna she wailed, "O Krishna, You could easily have averted this tragedy but You did not do so. Just as my sons have been completely annihilated, I curse that your Yadava clan be similarly wiped out and You too along with them, thirty-six years from now." Krishna smiled and replied, "Venerable aunt, I know how you feel and gladly accept your curse. But you must concede that I did try My best to avert the conflict. I warned Duryodhana so many times but he would not pay heed. Anyway, the past is past and there is not much point in brooding over it. Console yourself with the thought that it was after all the Lord's will." Krishna recalled that scene enacted over three decades ago. The Yadavas were now gone and one more scene remained to be enacted before the curtain could be rung down upon the *Dwapara Yuga*, and that was His own exit.

### **The Elegiac End to Lord Krishna's Earthly Life**

Krishna now withdrew to a forest, selected a nice tree, sat under it and went into meditation; as usual, He was dressed in yellow silk. Some distance away, there was a hunter passing by. Seeing the yellow dress through leaves, he mistook Krishna to be a spotted deer and shot an arrow, which pierced Krishna's heel. Krishna uttered a cry and hearing it, the hunter rushed to the spot. Instead of a deer, he saw Krishna lying on the ground and bleeding profusely. Stunned and horrified, he fell at Krishna's feet and begged forgiveness. In reply Krishna said, "Don't cry or be sorry. I am not angry with you. It was not your fault at all; let us just say it was God's will and that you played your part admirably in the Cosmic Drama, for which heaven would be your reward. Be at peace."

Meanwhile, Daruka, the charioteer of Krishna was searching for his Master. He knew Krishna had walked away from the carnage by the sea-side towards the forest. Guided by the scent of the Tulsi leaves which Krishna wore as a garland, he eventually came to where Krishna was lying mortally wounded. Overwhelmed with deep anguish, he cried, "O Lord, how did this terrible thing happen?" In a matter-of-fact tone, Krishna replied, "Daruka, there is no time now to discuss all that. Let Me quickly give you a few instructions. Firstly, you must return immediately to Dwaraka and gently break the news about Me and also the end of the Yadavas to my parents. They would no doubt be heartbroken, but you must console them. After My end, the waters of the sea would enter Dwaraka and the city would be submerged; so the women and children must not return to Dwaraka from Sangotra. Ask Arjuna to escort them

to Hastinapura where they could live. And now if you please, pull this arrow out before you leave."

Weeping like a child and with trembling hands, Daruka did as instructed. The arrowhead which Daruka extracted had been shaped from the piece of the iron pestle which could not be broken up earlier. While in the sea, the piece was swallowed by a fish. Later, the fish was caught and when it was cut open, there was the iron piece. The hunter used it to make an arrow-head and eventually by Divine design, that very arrow-head helped Krishna shed His mortal coil while respecting at the same time the curse laid upon Him!

The fatal arrow having been extracted from the foot, Krishna asked Daruka to hurry back. Tearfully Daruka went round Krishna three times and hastened to Dwaraka to carry out the assigned tasks. Mission over, Krishna smiled for the last time and then went into a Yogic trance. In that state He separated from the body which had served Him for over a century and returned to Vaikuntam, much to the great delight of all the celestial beings.

The Dwapara Yuga had ended, and mankind would have to wait five thousand and odd years before the Lord deigned to come down again as a *Poorna Avatar*.



## **WINDOW TO SAI SEVA**

### **CLEANING UP HOMES AND HEARTS IN THE CAPITAL CITY**

#### ***- The inspiring account of a rural service project undertaken by the Sai Youth in the outskirts of Delhi, the Capital of India, on June 8, 2008***

*Responding to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's clarion call to Love All, Serve All and Help Ever, Hurt Never, the Sai youth of Delhi state recently reaped a bountiful harvest of life lessons and inner growth when they plunged into action to serve a village as part of the Sri Sathya Sai Village Integrated Program (SSSVIP) – an all-India initiative of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations to bring out comprehensive and sustained development of under-privileged families in the villages of rural India.*

*Apart from serving the villagers with love as they physically removed mountains of garbage from their streets, unclogged open drains and educated the villagers on health and hygiene, the Sai Young Adults discovered a whole new appreciation for the many blessings in their own lives, a loving bond within their team and an inner spring of intense joy that welled up when they reached out to complete strangers with the feeling that he/she was an embodiment of the same divinity that they worship in the form of Bhagavan Baba.*

*It certainly was the awareness of Swami's teaching of unity that helped the Sai Youth see and experience every villager as an extension of their own selves. The whole experience was so fulfilling that the entire team not only returned on a spiritual high but were as eager to go back and do more.*

*Selfless service, the ultimate mantra for salvation that Bhagavan Baba has given to His devotees, has turned out to be the healthiest of addictions that the Sai Youth of Delhi can no longer shake off. Truly, it has proved to be the best panacea for the ills of modern lifestyle, for it allows us to "Bend the body, Mend the Senses and End the Mind" as Baba says.*

Our date with destiny was set on the morning of June 8, 2008. The turning point in our spiritual lives came about in the least expected of locations – an innocuous village called Matiyala, in Dwarka, Delhi. Little did we know that there would be such a pocket of intense squalor right under our noses within the relatively affluent national capital of India. And not for a moment did we suspect that serving the disadvantaged would turn out to be such an advantage for us, for we experienced great joy when we stood knee-deep in a garbage dump, working hard to clean up a neighbourhood that was suffering from disease and distress due to complete failure of civic services.

Bhagavan Baba has always encouraged us to seek the true goal of life by experiencing the state of oneness where we recognise the invisible and underlying spirit that pervades all apparent diversity. To reach that state of inner enlightenment, He urges us to direct our body, faculties and talents to alleviate the suffering of those in pain and need.

We, the blessed children of Sai from Delhi can never forget our SSSVIP adventure in Matiyala Village. A typical urban village, Mativala had quite a few problems that were crying out for remedial action.

The poor hygiene standards of its inhabitants, proliferation of open garbage dumps, multitude of health problems, lack of proper infrastructure, drugs misuse, and inadequate medical services were just a few of those. Our service project in Mativala was however not our first venture. In fact, we had conducted similar seva in the four other districts of Delhi – North, South, East and Central, and now we were in the last region, the West of Delhi.

### **Winning Love and Trust of the Locals**

One of the biggest challenges of conducting such service activities at any new venue, be it a village or urban colony, is to develop rapport with and gain the confidence of the locals. More often than not, they are beset with fears lest we have any hidden agenda in undertaking the service at their village. Well, we can hardly blame them for such thoughts, for it is indeed rare that such service activities are conducted by any organisation with a spirit of selfless love and service, and no ulterior motive.

### **Sri Sathya Sai Village Integration Programme**

But it is our faith in Swami and His love and guidance that has as always helped us in overcoming these initial hurdles. The Sai Youth reckoned that if they carried out the 'Cleanliness Drive' along with the survey for the Sri Sathya Sai Village Integrated Program (SSSVIP), then they may also be able to engage the locals in some meaningful learning process and involvement.

The work plan for the Village Seva was as follows:

#### **Work Plan: "Selfless Service and Love In Action"**

Here is a gist of all the work and organisation that had to be done:

- A total of 5 groups were to be formed on the day of 'gram seva', comprising of four sevadals and one local. These groups were named - Sathya, Dharma, Prema, Shanti and Ahimsa.
- The same number of sevadals would be involved in carrying out the health, hygiene, and basic cleanliness awareness drive.
- Further, the following activities were to be carried out:
  - o **A detailed village survey for SSSVIP.**
  - o **Cleaning the six side lanes with open drainage systems.**
  - o **Cleaning the area around the central park.**

As the day of Seva arrived, blessings from our dear Lord came down in the form of heavy rains. However, that did not dampen the spirits of the sevadals. One of the participants, Mr. Vineet Kapoor, observed, "When I reached Matiyala Village around 8 a.m. on Sunday, June 8, 2008, I had no words to describe my joy to find the *bhajan* hall filled with our youth members and elders from across Delhi. These members, who would have left their homes

early to reach the village on time, were enthusiastically singing His glory; they had no signs of fatigue on their faces.”

Sevadal volunteers purified their hearts and cleansed their minds by first singing bhajans. They all prayed for Bhagavan's blessings for the villagers; we had decided to adopt this village under the Sri Sathya Sai Village integrated Program.

Quickly after the *bhajan*, we divided ourselves in five groups named after each of the five human values of Truth, Peace, Love, Nonviolence and Right Conduct. Each cluster had ten to fifteen members along with a group leader and a local guide. Every group was allocated multiple tasks like surveying, cleaning garbage, distributing chlorine tablets and spreading awareness on health and hygiene in their respective zones in the village. The groups were then handed the materials and equipment to undertake the service including SSSVIP forms, spades, brooms, insecticide spraying machines, disinfectant powder and other necessary implements.

Once all the logistics had been taken care of, it was time to charge the air with divine energy. So we raised our hands together and began our task after three full-throated chants calling out to our dear Lord Sai to guide us - 'Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba ki Jai'. That reverberation of Bhagavan's name helped us proceed with love and confidence.

Soon after that, a few brothers started interacting with the villagers while filling up the SSSVIP forms, even as others took on the huge garbage dumps which had been left unattended by the villagers.

These huge dumps of waste were right next to their homes. And in some places, we were shocked to find even dead cats inside the dense and dark pile-up! It was no wonder that the health quotient of the village was so pathetic.

While one team went ahead clearing these dangerous dumps, another group carried out the distribution of chlorine tablets and helped spread awareness about health and hygiene.

The third team got busy with spraying the disinfectant powder and liquid insecticide on various water sources and also on the garbage to make sure mosquitoes did not breed there anymore. While all along the villagers were only watching us anxiously, it nevertheless was an eye opener for them.

It is said altruism is the healthiest of infections to catch. It could not have been truer for, out of nowhere emerged another brother from the village with a tricycle. The tricycle he said had been sent by the owner to help us carry the garbage bags. We loaded the tricycle with all garbage bags and disposed it in a nearby trash bin.

## **Transparency of SSSVIP Agenda Wins Villagers' Hearts and Confidence**

Swami was with us throughout this endeavour. While the villagers could have turned hostile or chosen not to cooperate with us out of suspicion, it was but Swami's blessings that nothing of that sort happened. On the contrary, we all had a very cordial and warm interaction with the villagers. Removal of the garbage, distribution of chlorine tablets and the nature of the survey that was conducted would certainly have helped the the villagers understand that the main motive behind all this was to share our love and serve them all.

Mr. D P Sahi, a first timer at the event, says, "This was my first experience with seva. We all helped in cleaning the village and conducted a survey, and paid special attention to what illnesses the children were suffering from. We also impressed upon them the evils of chewing tobacco, smoking and drinking. Additionally, we also guided them on how to keep water purified and use chlorine tablets, besides stressing upon basic health tips such as maintaining clean nails and the importance of sending their children to school. Overall, we received a warm response from the villagers."

The spirit and efficiency with which the SSSVIP was introduced was compelling enough for the villagers to shed their apathy and sense of mistrust, and come forward to appreciate, learn and participate in the effort. It was an ideal example of empowerment at the grassroots level where the local population could see the benefit of taking responsibility for their living conditions, in this instance, made possible only due to the loving inspiration from the Avatar of the age, who has always laid importance on village service. "This is the first time I have participated in such an activity and have really enjoyed the experience. I feel, if we return to the village a couple of times, the villagers would appreciate and realise that if someone with no connection or interest in the village is helping us live a cleaner life, then we can ourselves make the effort to do it ourselves," said Dipankar, a Sai volunteer.

Coming face to face with the stark hardships faced by the residents of the village proved startling for many who went to serve. It shook the Sai Young Adults, who were from relatively affluent backgrounds. This experience made them revisit their own attitude towards life and their expectations from it. One such epiphany came to seva participant Mr. Vipin Bhatia, who confessed, "Having lived abroad for some time and then getting used to the comforts there, the first thing that struck me was how lucky I am. Working in a comfortable office with A.C. and other facilities, I normally do not think about it, and sometimes even complain about lack of other comforts as compared to some other offices/companies....But when I entered the village, I realized that I am still a lot more fortunate than people living here. A good thing was seeing so many youth working together, unlike before when in such activities we used to see more of adults. On the whole, this activity has made me feel very good as it not only gave me an opportunity to make others' lives better, but also helped in making me a better person and a more contented human being."

Swami says: "He who selflessly renders service, sweetened with love, to My creation; he who sees Me in everyone and everything; he who remembers Me at every moment, is the yogi nearest to Me."

It was quite apparent on this Sunday morning, that there were plenty of Swami's children who were trying to live up to Swami's expectations.

### **Who Serves Whom? The True Spiritual Enquiry**

At the end of the experience, the real beneficiaries of the munificence of these energetic and Sai-inspired youth were they themselves. Roohi Sharma shares her experiences of the day: "The previous day I dreamt that I am being accepted as a new member of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation and it came true that morning on June 8. I was really excited and curious to experience that divine day. On reaching Dwarka, Matiyala village, I was completely set to start off.... But I was astonished to find just one lady member by my side, yet Baba blessed me and gave me the strength, so the lack of strength of lady members did not hamper my enthusiasm at all. I felt as if Baba was there with me and was encouraging me to take my first step towards Him.

"Besides distribution of ORS powder for children and chlorine tablets, I was also allotted the survey duty falling under the SSVIP. It was a thrilling and fine experience.

"This experience showed me another life that exists in India. I always read that Baba says '*True India Lives in the Villages*'. I am really privileged that I got the opportunity to realise this that day. It was a wonderful project to assist. The unity with which the whole task was performed added colour to the whole program. All the sevadals were on their feet on Baba's command, moving from door to door and helping the needy with all the support material that was required.

"In short, it was an awakening experience. I really feel that I had missed a lot in the past. This experience gave me divine pleasure and awakened my soul to the reality of life. *Love All Serve All* was experienced both in words and in action that day.... And the wordings written on the invitation card - *mukh me sai naam aur haath me kaam* (*The Lord's Name on the lips and His work in the hands*) proved true that day."

### **Empowering the Villagers to Take Responsibility**

During the course of the morning, Mr. Jatinder Cheema and Vibhu Mahajan spoke to several village folk and sevadals to gauge their observations and reactions, and it came as no surprise that the response was overwhelming, both from the villagers for the support and awareness that had been provided to them that day and from the sevadals for the inexplicable joy they experienced in fulfilling Swami's desire.

Almost all the villagers spoke in unison when they said that it was a wonderful idea to have the Sai volunteers visit them on this noble mission. Taking this

forward, many of them also expressed their desire to be part of the Sathya Sai Seva Organisation.

Another village resident was so inspired from this whole experience that he told us, ““I would be happy to participate in the effort the next time you visit us. I really liked the initiative that you have taken.”

### **Bliss Flows Both Ways**

But the joy was greater for those who served. Amarendra Kumar participated for the first time in this seva and he couldn't get enough of it. “I am going through a period of true bliss after performing the seva. I was asked by the villagers if we came from the government and I proudly responded that we were from the Sathya Sai Organisation!”

Mr. S. K. Malik has been a regular seva dal since 2001. As an experienced volunteer of the Sai Organisation, he said, “I am always looking for an opportunity to serve the Lord and participate in the Village Integration Programs. The villagers asked me if we would come on a regular basis and I responded that, if Swami wills it, we surely would. I impressed upon them that in addition to the Seva that we were carrying out, it was Swami's desire for us to bring awareness in them to continue the task we had initiated so that their children would have a cleaner and healthier lifestyle.”

Mr. Jogindar Singh, another sevadal volunteer, said, “I am in the property business, and one day, my neighbour suggested I should take out some time to serve the needy. Normally the time I would have spent attending to my needs, I spent today doing seva. All I can say is that I am truly grateful to him, for, after performing the seva I cannot describe the joy that I am experiencing.”

Clearly, the impact of the service was as much on the volunteers as it was on the villagers. Describing the concluding session of the one-day seva activity, Mr. Vineet, says, “After completing our duties, when we reported back to the bhajan hall, we all settled down and sang *bhajans* again and closed the event offering *aarti* to Swami. Then, there was a small talk by Mr. Jatinder Cheema, State President, Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Delhi, who congratulated the entire Sai family, and spoke about the significance of participating in such a meaningful activity. As the event reached its end, I could not help but pray to Bhagavan and ask Him to allow me to participate and partake of such bliss from more such activities in the future.”

Reflecting similar sentiments, Rishi Sharma, said, “The joy that I felt today, perhaps I have never experienced before. Today was our first step towards selfless seva, and with Sai Baba's blessings, we will continue to stay on this path. We achieved a small feat in helping alleviate some of the village's problems, about which we would not have spared a thought under normal circumstances. I believe the time all of us spent today for this activity is the first step towards leading a more fulfilling and meaningful life. With Baba's blessing, we will have many more opportunities to serve in this noble cause.”

## **The Lasting Lessons of Selfless Service**

Yes, it was a small initiative, but a significant one. The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step, and as Swami often reiterates, "No act of service is high, no service is low; each act of service is equal in the eyes of the Lord; it is the readiness with which it is done, the joy, the efficiency, the skill with which it is performed that matters... If you consider the qualifications needed for service, know that what is essential is a pure heart, uncontaminated by conceit, greed, envy, hatred or competition. You should also have faith in God as the spring of vitality, virtue, and justice. Service is worship you offer to the God in the heart of everyone. "

There was one touching example of such heartfelt service given to a poor innocent baby, which will have far reaching consequences for its future life – one Seva dal member relates it as follows:

"As we were just about to return back I got a call from another brother of mine; he wanted me to visit along with him a home which he had just finished surveying. There he said was a small one year old girl child who had a huge tumor on her back. Upon enquiring we found that they had shown the child at AIIMS and as the doctors had told them to deposit Rs. 15,000 for the operation they had given up as they could not afford this amount.

We assured the family members that the child would be blessed by Bhagavan Baba and that the organisation was ready to support them in all matters. One of our brothers handed them a packet of vibhuti and explained to them its significance. We called one of our brother Seva dals who happened to work in AIIMS. On examining the child he also spoke to the family and assured them of his complete support for her treatment giving them his contact details. I was amazed to see such an amazing response from all my brothers towards the small child that I felt I was actually living in 'Ram Rajya'."

The lessons from the morning's activities were manifold for the Sai Youth, but the two that stand out are:, One, that selfless service gives inexplicable joy because you feel Swami's presence in every step despite all odds that you may have to put up with; and second, when you take the first step towards sharing love with others, God takes care of the rest. Be assured that all work will proceed smoothly without any interruptions.

It was quite apparent that morning that many sevadals would have loved to carry on with the seva activities beyond the allotted time. Such was the satisfaction and happiness that these volunteers enjoyed that day.

While we have so far associated the word 'addiction' with some form of evil, after that day we began to see its positive connotation. For, you just need to indulge once in the act of selfless service, the true happiness and joy that follows such a selfless act are enough to addict you forever.

The morning's events can be aptly concluded by brother Vineet's observations. He said, "Just as Lakshmana had asked Rama, I ask our Sai

Rama, 'Bhagavan! In your kingdom, if you assign any responsibility, I shall fulfil it. That is enough fortune for me.' "

Sai Ram.

- **The Sai Youth of Delhi**



## **PRASHANTI DIARY**

### **June 8, 2008 – Swami Returns To Prasanthi Nilayam**

The academic year at Puttaparthi may have a beginning and an end like any other academic year elsewhere, but unlike any other place, the way it begins and ends is truly divine and thus unique. The year ends with the Lord telling the students to return home and spread His love and joy to all there. The year begins with the students receiving Him with all their love and joy! And so on June 8, 2008, when the good news came that Swami would be leaving Brindavan early that morning, and after a few scheduled halts on the way, would arrive at Puttaparthi by 11 am, the events that followed later made it the actual opening day of the Puttaparthi campus of the Sri Sathya Sai University (though the college had started on June 2). For, what is the University without Sri Sathya Sai!

Entering the premises of the Sai Kulwant Hall, one could observe a huge gathering waiting eagerly in anticipation. One could not help but wonder as to how on earth did so many people come to Prashanthi Nilayam! A gala procession had been arranged from the Gopuram gate to welcome Swami. En route, Swami had made stops at Muddenahalli and Bagepalli to bless the people there. That it took more than 20-25 minutes for His car to navigate the last 4-5 kms from the Super Speciality Hospital to the Mandir would give an idea about how slow Swami was travelling. He was moving slowly so that His devotees who had gathered on the way to catch one glimpse of Him could fulfill their desire. As the car reached the Gopuram gate, many things began in a synchronised manner. The welcome song went on air through the speakers beginning with an enthusiastic, "Jai Bolo Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba Ji Ki Jai." A procession of orange clad students began with the high pitched chanting of the Vedas. There were a set of students doing vigorous *bhangra* dance on both sides of the car. The 8th and 9th class students held and waved balloons and flags to signal the colour and gaiety of the occasion. Handfuls of flower petals were devotionally offered onto His car that had the privileged fortune of being the vehicle of choice for the Lord.

Swami took a complete *darshan* round and as throngs of thrilled devotees "rose to the occasion", Swami flashed beautiful smiles to all around. He went to the portico near the interview room and there, asked for the *aarthi* to be done. Before that roses were offered and blessings were sought. A devotional fervour replaced the gay atmosphere as the *aarthi* began. As Swami moved towards the ladies side, the headmistress of the Primary School, performed a traditional *aarthi* and "warded off the evil eye" with a coconut! Swami smiled through the ritual and then entered the Yajur Mandir. He retired at about 12:00 noon.

In the evening, Swami arrived at about 5:20 pm. Much to everyone's delight, He had decided to come out in the chair. So, the summer showers which began in the month of April and continued in full flow through His stay at Brindavan, had been extended into the fresh academic year as well! Swami

was in those, "I will accept everyone's letter" moods. With a gentle smile, He slowly moved through the ladies side. It was reminiscent of the times when Swami would come walking slowly down the path. As He moved along the path, He slowly alternated His attention and "eye-span" to the left for a while and then to the right as everyone vied and pined for His attention. There was a lot of excitement as He moved through the students. The 'freshers' (newly joined students of the college and institute) were being exposed for the first time to the taste of what it means to be His students. Swami completed a round through the gents' side, and then as He moved in the front through the students, He collected letters and blessed the birthday boys. The *bhajans* began at 5:30 pm.

When there is a lot of joy and fervour waiting to burst forth, the *bhajans* act as a wonderful release! And adding to the existing enthusiasm, Swami came straight out to the front of the stage and sat there. The difference in excitement levels when one can see Swami and when one cannot, could be easily made out from the tempo of the clapping that went on inside the Bhajan Hall in sharp contrast to the doubled speed one that went on in the Sai Kulwant Hall! Swami made a face indicating that the beats were going awry! He also clapped and set the beat so that the exuberance at seeing Him doesn't disrupt the rhythm of the *bhajans*. As He sat outside for four *bhajans*, He called a student and took his letter. The joy of that student knew no bounds and he returned to place, lighter in the hand and in the heart too!

Swami then went into the Bhajan Hall for the rest of the *bhajans*. It was 6:10 pm when He received *aarthi* and retired for the day.

### **June 15, 2008 – Bhangra Dance by His Students**

The greatest fruition of any talent is when it is offered to the Lord, said a wise man once. He must have been really wise because that is exactly what even Bhagavan Baba says. On one occasion in Trayee Brindavan, when a teacher said, "Talent is a gift of God", Swami corrected him and said, "No! Talent is God." This awareness makes it easy to understand why each and every bit of talent that is latent in anyone tries its best to become patent in front of the Lord. The talent bustling in the students of Swami's University was also no exception to this!

On June 15, 2008, the students of His college were all ready and geared up with a *Bhangra* dance programme. The dance was to be presented before Him. The Bhajan Hall was filled with students in their costumes awaiting the divine command to go out to the Sai Kulwant Hall and dance to theirs' and their Lord's hearts content! Swami came for *darshan* at about 4:10 pm and to everyone's surprise drove out of the main gate into the Puttaparthi township. And when He returned, He went straight to the Bhajan Hall without even going for a complete *darshan* round. Inside the Bhajan Hall, He collected letters and spoke to the student participants. When Swami enquires into the details of the programme, know that it is definitely not His inquisitiveness about the programme. What is there that He does not know? It is but an enthralling dose of Love and affection that charges the participants to

do better than their best in front of Him. After the short interaction, Swami told the boys to go out and start the programme. He too moved to the centre of the stage in Sai Kulwant Hall.

As soon as Swami asked for the Veda chanting to be stopped, two students came to Swami with a card and planned programme proceedings. Swami blessed them and they took the much sought after *Padanamaskar*. Then the programme began. Two boys compered the show bringing to light the teachings of Guru Nanak and the other Sikh gurus. One of the comperes played the role of a disciple of the Sikh gurus while the other acted as a devotee of Swami! Beautiful comparisons and blends in the teachings of both the spiritual masters were then brought about. The atmosphere in a Gurudwara was very well depicted and the sheer numbers of the participants - 64 in all - was enough to make everyone feel as if they were seated in the heart of Punjab. There was a singer and another person who provided the music for the entire programme. But that was only the audio over the public address system. The chorus of the 64 students energetically exercising their lungs in the heights of excitement and feverish devotion was so loud that at times it overpowered the blast of the Bose speakers hanging high above in the hall.

*Bhangra* is a dance with a lot of colour, energy and life. The swirling turbans added the colour; the boys gave the energy and the sweetly smiling and engrossed Swami lent life to the performance. The tempo and rhythm went on building up as is the wont of any Bhangra performance. Huge formations, criss-crosses and human pyramids came up. Various instruments and tools used in Punjab were on display too - swirling wheels, wooden stretches, poles and bare hands and legs combined in an amazing array of sequences to add spice to the fervour of the dances. Many of these visually attractive steps and items were performed right in front of Swami, close to the stage. Once the dance concluded, all of participants came right up in the front and collected themselves in front of Bhagavan. Swami was in all smiles as He watched them.

Any art form needs patronage to survive, and more importantly, thrive. Who can give better patronage than the mother? And which mother is more loving than the Divine Mother? Swami indicated that He would Himself come down the stage to be with all the boys. The next moment, He stood up and walked down the dais! All the students thronged around Him. Like a lotus surrounded by buzzing bees, Swami blossomed as cameras clicked and videos whirled. More than once He told all of them, "Very very good programme." When in a burst of emotion, the boys thundered, "Swami, we love you", He smiled and whispered back, "I love you too!" One was reminded of the statement, "In the depths of silence, the voice of God is heard." And here, in the deafening enthusiasm of the boys too, the sweet mellifluous voice, "I love you too" was heard so well. Clearly, the silence in that statement refers to something deeper than mere absence of sound! It is more a 'sound' state of perfect harmony with oneself - the way one is when in the Presence of Swami.

Swami spoke to the boys as He posed for pictures and returned to the stage.

Once on the stage, He beckoned a few and took their letters. Some of the 'freshers' (boys joined in the new academic year) were thrilled when Swami called them near and spoke to them. The end result of the interaction were 64 faces that beamed in unison after receiving the divine outpouring, and the many other happy faces that had witnessed the divine outpour! Swami then moved into the Bhajan Hall and the usual evening *bhajans* began. At about 6:00 pm He received *aarthi* and left.

### **June 21, 2008 – Inauguration of Two Ambulances for Prasanthi Nilayam Ashram**

Two Tata Winger vans stood majestically in front of Yajur Mandir on the afternoon of June 21. Quick enquiries revealed that the Puttaparthi ashram, by Swami's blessings would be receiving the two fully equipped state-of-the-art Tata ambulances. Though formally attached to the Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital, these ambulances would be available for all Sai Institutions in Puttaparthi, including the schools, colleges, hostels, stadiums, hospitals and staff quarters. It was another yet another gift of Love and Grace from Bhagavan.

That evening Swami came out at about 4:45 pm. The vans caught His attention the moment He came out of His residence. Swami asked about the vehicles and it was promptly said, "Swami these are the well-equipped ambulances for the ashram." He then went closer to have a better look. The oxygen cylinders and the stretchable and retractable bed looked elegant and professionally compact in the vans. Where Swami is concerned, the unexpected is something that has to be expected. Swami enquired about the drivers' place. The front door was opened and Swami was shown the drivers' seat. He scrutinised it carefully. He seemed fully satisfied with the new powered twins and blessed them for their "release". As He was moving towards His car, He saw coconuts on the ground. He told the students and security personnel there to break them as signs of auspiciousness in front of the van. As they were about to do so, Swami, with a sweet smile told them, "Wait! I will go for *darshan*. Then you break the coconuts."

That statement from Swami was so wonderful for many reasons. For ages, Swami has been breaking coconuts. One of His favourite styles is to hold a coconut each in both His hands and then crack one against the other, using one of them as a breaking instrument. Both the coconuts were thus easily halved. On other occasions, Swami throws the coconut to the floor and as it shatters, devotees make a rush to collect the pieces as holy *prasad*. But nowadays, Swami often asks the people near Him to enjoy the privileged honour of breaking the coconuts. On many such occasions, when people throw the coconuts to the ground, some pieces fly towards the Lord. Though Swami is always amused by this, it is not the case with many devotees. Their Lord for them is the most powerful but He is also the sweetest and the most delicate. So when the coconut pieces fly towards Swami, while the coconut breakers are rewarded with a smile from Swami, they also get glares from the devotees! And so this time, when Swami was just beside the vans said, "Wait till I go for *darshan* and then break it," one could not help but suppress a

smile.

Swami moved into the Sai Kulwant Hall on the chair itself and there was a surge from all sides. The Sai Kulwant Hall was almost filled up because of the week long *parayanam* of the Ramayanam was scheduled to begin the next day. Added to that, it being a "weekend", devotees had gathered in good numbers for darshan. Swami went about collecting letters and blessing everyone. His progress was slow and gentle. The bliss on the faces of the devotees showed that by His touch, smiles and Grace, their "progress" had been made rapid and huge! When Swami moves amongst the devotees in the chair, He is often covered by the lapping waves of the devotees with hearts flooded with devotion. And on such occasions, one can easily see Swami reflected so beautifully in the faces of all His devotees. If you want to know who Swami is, you just need to look at the devotees' faces. A mere look will make you realize that Swami is an embodiment of Joy, Peace and Love! Swami then collected letters from all and then moved into the students' zone. Blessing everyone, He slowly waded through them. He blessed all the birthday boys and then went into the interview room. *Bhajans* began at 5:30 pm and concluded at around 6:05 pm. And thus ended another wonderful day.

### **June 22 and 23, 2008 – First Two days of Rama Sudha Sapthaha in the Divine Presence**

On 22nd of June, the entire Kulwant hall appeared in a different light altogether. It looked as if the legendary "*Rama Rajyam*" had descended on earth. Well, it certainly was not 'as if', *Raama Rajyam* had indeed descended!

Our Lord Sai Rama often speaks about Lord Rama and the way He had lived and conducted Himself. But, more than anything else, when you listen to Swami describe Lord Rama and narrate His various experiences; you are always reminded of the daily activities of Swami Himself.

In line with the mood of the day, the stage was rightly occupied by the three beautiful statues of Lord Rama, Lakshmana and Mother Sita. Hanuman however was conspicuous by his absence. It later came to be known that these statues were only a temporary arrangement; the actual idols would be brought in a procession in the afternoon! And so in the afternoon, the Yajur Mandir was bustling with activity. A gaily decorated procession stood in readiness to escort the two Ramas from different Yugas! Swami came out at about 4:30 pm and the procession started. The grandly decorated palanquin bearing the idols of the Lord was carried by priests chanting hymns and mantras in praise and glory of the "perfect man" of the Treta age. The Sanathana Dharma, the most ancient Indian religion and culture, is so glorious and grand - while in many places, God is reduced to a mere book, idol or picture, the Sanathana Dharma, uplifts everything - idols, pictures and everything to the level of God! The "Gaja Nade" as it is called is the traditional elephant walk that the priests simulated while carrying the idols. This meant that Rama seated atop the palanquin would have felt as though He is seated on an elephant!

The movements were such and the priests undulated and gracefully twisted their bodies to exactly replicate that walk. Swami in the meanwhile, sat just at the threshold of the Sai Kulwant Hall entrance from Yajur Mandir, and said that He would prefer to wait for the idols to be taken in procession completely, before He began His *darshan* round. That was so sweet and understanding of Swami. Imagine the state of mind of people if both Swami and Rama came for *darshan* together! The two eyes will never be enough to immerse one's self in the beauty and glory of both the forms at the same time. After all what can one do when the tastiest of dishes and the best of desserts are placed simultaneously in front for the feast! So, as Swami sat sweetly allowing the palanquin to proceed, all the assembled devotees had a wonderful *darshan* of Rama, Lakshmana, Seeta and Hanuman. Towards the later part of the procession, the "Hamsa Nade" or the gait of the majestic swan was adopted and the palanquin proceeded and came to a halt at the stage.

Then Swami sweetly began His *darshan* rounds. It was a double delight. It was as if even if we were not yet spiritually evolved to see and feel the divinity in the idols, here was the same Lord in flesh and blood! The thought that the Avatar was in our midst in physical form, heightened by the presence of the idols atop the palanquin was so elevating that we all felt very privileged that we were actual contemporaries of God in human form. Bhagavan glided through the hall in the chair and was all smiles towards the assembled devotees. He went through the gents' side and then came to the students section of the hall. Blessing the birthday boys and collecting letters from many, Swami went on stage. There He lit the lamp and with that officially declared open the "Srimad Ramayana Sudha Pravachana Saptaham"! The *Kalashasthapana* and *Shodashopachara puja* to the idols were performed and everyone awaited the next part of the programme to begin. Swami sat listening to the Vedic chants as He gently fondled and played with a yellow rose bud in His hand. He opened up the petals slowly. It was so symbolic of what He was doing to all the children seated in front of Him. They come to Him as buds and with His touch; He makes them bloom into fully blossomed flowers.

At 4.45, Bhagavan, seated on stage, asked for the programme to commence. A learned scholar, Sri Vidwan Nidumamidi Srikanta Rao, spoke in Telugu for about 45 minutes, introducing the Ramayana Saptaham, and stating that each day, one *Kandam* (section) of the Ramayanam would be expounded by a scholar, till the last day, which would be dedicated to the *Pattabhishekam* or Coronation ceremony. The scholar then spoke about the first part of the Ramayanam, the *Bala Kanda* and the inner significance of many events narrated there. As he went about the narration of the events of the planned coronation, the initial exploits of the young princes, Swami listened appreciatively with rapt attention. At the end of his talk, Swami looked at the *bhajan* group and signaled them to begin with a hint word, "Shlokam". And so began "Shree Raghavam..." the *aalap* for the *bhajan* "Shree Raghunandana". *Bhajans* continued after that and everyone clapped and sang enthusiastically. All the *bhajans* were on Lord Rama with special emphasis on the initial phases of Rama's life - to the events of *Baala Kanda* in particular! *Prasadam*

was distributed while the *bhajans* went on. Bhagavan accepted *arati* at 6.10 pm before returning to His residence.

The afternoon of 23rd too began on the same auspicious note as Swami came for *darshan* at 4 pm. However, Swami cut short His rounds and moved to the stage after the ladies side. After sitting on the stage for a few minutes, He went inside the interview room, and emerged half an hour later. The proceedings for the evening began at 5 pm. The talk for the day was on the *Ayodhya kanda* by the scholar, Mr. Malla Pragada Sriman Narayana Moorthy from Guntur. He spoke very beautifully on the inner significance of the *kanda*, stating that Ayodhya means, "Where no one wins". This part of the Ramayana, expounded the scholar, was the portion where everyone - King Dasharatha, the queens, all the four brothers and everyone in the family is defeated. Yet, all of them lose so that *Dharma* or righteousness can win. And that was the significance of that *Kanda*. He further explained that the *kanda* also highlighted the beautiful congruence between *Sathya* and *Dharma*. Like the two feet which are perfectly in sync and make movement possible, only when *Sathya* and *Dharma* are in sync is progress possible.

Swami was very moved at many instances during the narration. The speaker too spoke very powerfully on the *Ayodhya Kanda* and the entire audience listened in rapt attention. After the stirring hour long Telugu speech by the learned scholar, *bhajans* commenced at 6 pm. But this time, even Swami sang softly the lead for some of the *bhajans* along with the main singer. Needless to say, that only catalysed a more devotional and enthusiastic singing by everyone assembled! After *bhajans* for half an hour, Swami received *Aarthi* and left.

### **June 24 and 25, 2008 – Third and fourth Day of the Rama Sudha Spathaham**

Tuesday or *Mangala varam* (literally meaning 'auspicious day'), as referred in many Indian languages, dawned in Prasanthi Nilayam with the chanting of the holy *Vishnu Sahasranaama* in the Mandir. All the devotees who had assembled offered the holy *akshatha* (rice) grains to a picture of Swami's cosmic form that had been so efficiently distributed to all of them. At about 8:45 am, Swami came for *darshan* in the chair. He directly went to the interview room after passing through the ladies side. The *bhajans* began at 9 as usual and then happened a very beautiful incident. Swami came in for *bhajans* and noticed that a student was seated in the front with a bowl of *Akshatha* grains as it was his birthday. Swami called him and blessed him profusely. But, the magical moment came when the student asked for *paada namaskar* and Swami consented. At that time, there was a sudden momentary silence as the *bhajan* that was on had just concluded. And when the student placed his head on the Lotus feet, the next *bhajan* began - *Sathya Sai Paadaambujam, Bhajore Manasa Nirantaram* (Oh mind! Dwell incessantly on the Lotus feet of Sathya Sai). A thrill went through all who were a witness to this poignant scene, and the student must have been overwhelmed for he stayed down on His feet for more than 10 seconds. Even Swami appeared to

be enjoying this "coincidence" and smiled very sweetly! The *bhajans* concluded and Swami left after receiving *Aarthi*.

In the evening, Swami arrived at about 4:30 p.m. He completed the *darshan* rounds and came onstage. Then, He called a boy and took his letter. Opening it, Swami saw that the letter was a full page long. He made a face of mock anger and then asked, "Why do you write so much? Write a few lines - that'll suffice!" The boy returned with a smile on his face. He was so happy that Swami spoke to him that maybe that advice went unheard! Immediately, Swami called another boy to take his letter. This time, as He slowly opened it, all watched in bated breath! Swami Himself seemed to open it with an expectant anticipation. Seeing that the letter consisted only of a few lines, He smiled and so did everyone around. After this, Swami went around the upper stage and then via the inner portico, went into the interview room.

Swami later returned to the stage from the interview room to start the proceedings at 5.15 p.m. The speaker on June 24 was Sri S. Ranganath garu from Bangalore, who spoke in English about the *Aranya Kanda* for 45 minutes, noting various points of interest in Valmiki's poetry. It was more of a Sanskrit scholars' delight with the erudite speaker outlining the beautiful grammar and perfect language employed by the sage Valmiki. He also drew out examples from the works of various modern and contemporary writers where they had been influenced and inspired by the Ramayana. Therefore, he stated, that the epic Ramayana has a great relevance irrespective of the age or era! At the end of his talk, Swami saw that one of the students was clicking photos prolifically. Swami asked him if there was a film in the camera. The student, on his knees, cheekily pulled out the memory chip from the camera, showed it to Swami and said, "No film, Swami!" Swami smiled and asked for the *bhajans* to begin. The *bhajans* began and they were all specific to the episodes and the characters of the *Aranya Kanda* of Ramayana. After *bhajans*, Swami enquired whether any *prasadam* was available! When it was being checked, He said that *prasadam* may be distributed the next day. Smilingly He asked for *Aarthi* and then left.

June 25 was the day dedicated for the *Kishkindha Kanda*. Swami arrived in the evening before the students had come in. He completed His *darshan* rounds on the ladies side and took a detour, as there was a huge empty space since the students had not yet filed in, and then cut across the marble blocks. He then spoke to the two sevadal youth who were seated near the pillar as part of the security measures to ensure that no one rushes upto Swami out of the blue to touch His Feet. The youth were taken aback, but were nevertheless filled with joy as Swami spoke to them. Swami then went into the interview room.

After He came out, He took a round around the stage and inner portico, and once again went into the interview room. The speaker scheduled for the evening was Dr. Thangirala Venkata Subbarao from Bangalore. From there, Swami spoke a while with the *bhajan* singers and then came out of the bhajan hall too. Swami came out and then, after a while of Veda chanting, asked for



the speaker to be introduced. The speaker offered his obeisance to Swami and began the talk.

He detailed at length on the Ramayana story from the point when Hanuman meets with the two princes, Rama and Lakshmana till the point when Hanuman stands ready on the shores of the ocean, ready to take-off to Lanka. The killing of Vali at the hands of Rama and the wonderful dialogue that followed was narrated. Vali asks Rama if it was fair on His part to kill him in that fashion from behind. Rama replies, "Oh Vali! I never challenged you in a fight. I am on a hunt and I hunted you like any hunter would do a wild animal. Your deeds show that you are indeed a wild animal as you have eyed the wife of another, and treated your own brother very badly. As for the enmity, though you are not My direct enemy, you are the enemy of My friend Sugriva, and so you become My enemy too!" Vali then repents and begs for Rama's forgiveness. The narration highlighted Rama's crystal clear understanding of Truth and Righteousness. At one point, the speaker said that just like the forest in Ramayana had been transformed by the penance of the sages, Puttaparthi had been transformed by the 'penance' of Swami. At this point, Swami burst out laughing! With a smile, He said, "I never did any penance of any sort!" All those who saw it smiled and nodded back at Him.

There exists a misnomer among many that Swami is a great spiritual seeker who has loads of 'penance' backing Him. He is not a spiritual seeker, but the One who is spiritually sought; He does not need penance to back Him. On the contrary, He is the one who backs all the penance of the world! The mind foolishly may make comparisons between Him and the many sages, but the heart will say that the only apt comparison is between Him and Lord Rama for both are incomparable and that is the similarity between them!

After the speech completed in about 50 minutes, there was a loud applause and the speaker was blessed by Swami. Swami then asked for *bhajans* to be sung. The instructions were that only Hanuman *bhajans* should be sung. The first *bhajan* to begin was "Rama Lakshmana Jaanaki". Now this *bhajan* is special because, the lead is always "Rama Lakshmana Janaki" while the follow is always, "Jai bolo hanuman ki". As soon as the first line was sung, Swami sang out aloud, "Jai bolo Hanuman Ki!" Apparently, it seemed that the Lord was reminding all about the special nature of the *bhajan*. Well, a little deeper thinking and it was obvious that Lord was showing mankind another beautiful aspect. In the divine romance between the Lord and His devotees, the devotee always keeps singing and thinking of the Lord while the Lord thinks and sings about the devotees. At a time, when all the devotees assembled in the hall were singing the Lord's name, our Lord was singing the devotee's name! Needless to say, it indeed was an awe-inspiring and thrilling sight! After four *bhajans*, Swami asked for the *Aarthi* and then left.

### **June 26 and 27, 2008 – The Fifth and Sixth Day of Rama Sudha Sapthaah**

The holy Thursday on June 26 was to play host to the Sundara Kanda of the Ramayana. In the morning, the *laksharchana* by the devotees gathered in Sai Kulwant Hall began at 7.30 a.m., with the chant of the Sri Sathya Sai

Ashtothara Sahasranamavali. Bhagavan arrived at 8.40 a.m. while the chanting was in progress and sat on the stage for a sometime. It was such a wonderful feeling for all present at the moment in the hall - to chant His 1008 names in His physical presence! He then moved to the Bhajan Hall, and then to the interview room. The chanting concluded at 9.10 a.m. and Bhagavan arrived in the Bhajan Hall for the *bhajans* to begin. He moved to the interview room for a few minutes, then returned to the Bhajan Hall, sat there for half an hour and accepted *arati* at 10 a.m. before returning to His residence.

Swami returned in His chair to Sai Kulwant Hall at 4.10 p.m. and moved to the interview room. After a round of the Bhajan Hall and the verandah for a few minutes, He came onstage at 4.45 p.m. and stayed there for 45 minutes while the Vedam went on. As has become the norm, as soon as He comes on the stage the priests offer to Him a garland of lotuses and also get blessed flowers to be offered for the day to the deity. The Vedam went on and the priests also kept chanting the *shlokas* from the Sundara Kanda. As Swami sat listening, He called a few students and said something to them, after which everybody started smiling. When Swami shares a joke, it is such a beautiful sight. The smile on His face broadens till it seems to cover the entire face. Then the lips open and a whole hearted laughter gently rocks His body. It's such a wonderful sight to see that even any onlooker cannot help but smile. A great devotee had termed this beauty of Swami as omni-felicity. At the same time, He felicitates so many. Everyone sitting there feels that a wave of His hand or a smile from His lips is for them too! Swami then called more students and collected letters from them. On this day He seemed so intent on the Veda chanting, that He let it go on for quite some time. It was almost 5:15 p.m. when Swami asked for the speaker to be introduced.

The speech for the day was on the *Sundara Kandam* by Dr. Mylavaram Srinivasa Rao from Guntur to speak in Telugu. The entire *Kanda* was on the glory of Hanuman. Hanuman is the champion in all fields related to the body, mind or soul. The speaker highlighted these wonderful qualities of Hanuman in a very poetic way. The *Sundara Kanda* is one which is a repository of so many secrets and so many beautiful episodes - thus the name. The talk was a delight for those who could understand Telugu; for the others, it felt like music to the ears! And so, he held the audience spell-bound for 90 minutes. He was so lost in the glory of Hanuman's love and devotion to Lord Rama, that he lost track of time and went on with his speech. Seeing the audience getting restless, Swami gently reminded the speaker of the time! Swami's communication skills are something that all must emulate. He says, "Do not speak the unpleasant Truth." But He always speaks the Truth and the way He speaks is so wonderful that nobody is ever hurt. His words are the sweetest and most wonderful. The speaker concluded and Swami immediately received *aarthi* and retired for the evening.

The concluding *Laksharchana* was with the chanting of Sri Lalitha Sahasranama on June 27. All the devotees chanted "Aum Sri Matre Namah" as the Sahasranama went on from 7.30 to 8.25 a.m. The scholar who chanted the *Sahasranama* spoke a few words extolling the compassion of the mother

and then concluded the morning session in time for the *bhajans* to begin as usual at 9 o'clock in the Bhajan Hall.

The afternoon session began with Bhagavan arriving in His chair at 3.45 p.m. Moving to the interview room after a few minutes onstage, He emerged at 4.15 and then took a round on the verandah. All the priests were called to the Mandir portico. Swami wanted to distribute special clothes for the priests to wear for the next day function. As they sat in two rows, Swami moved gracefully amidst them handing over each of them a yellow bundle and gifting each with the opportunity to touch or kiss His feet. Then, telling the priests to proceed with the Poojas as usual, He came onstage and sat for a while with the Vedam chanting going on in the background. Out of the blue, Swami beckoned two American brothers from among the students to chant Vedam onstage. They were taken aback but with His touch, regained composure and chanted the Vedas with aplomb. Swami told everyone to stop chanting and listen to them as they went about chanting flawlessly! The Mother's heart swelled with pride as the amazed priests watched the lads in admiration. Swami then blessed them and sent them back. He asked for Sathya, an Iranian boy from the Primary School to be brought to Mandir! Quick messages were passed and the little kid of 9 years was picked up from the playground, quickly washed up and brought to the Mandir! As He came, Swami asked him whether he could chant vedas. That tiny kid too chanted the Medha Suktam with as much proficiency as anyone else. When, at Swami's behest, the boy told on mike that he was a 9 year old from Iran, there was a loud applause. Swami was very happy and He told the child to sit in the front.

The programme of the speech commenced at five o'clock. The *Yuddha Kandam* was narrated in Telugu by Sahasravadhani Garikipati Narasimha Rao till six o'clock. He spoke with a speed that had been hitherto unknown during the *saptaha*. In between the speech however, Swami said with a smile, "He is speaking so fast." Oratorially, the speaker was a marvel. But Swami always has in mind every devotee in the hall - and many cannot follow such rapid Telugu. Many credited the speaker for translating parts of his speech into English too. The speech concluded and Swami asked for the *bhajans* to be sung. Prasadam was blessed to be distributed to all. Swami asked for *aarathi* and it was an amazing sight that day with about 5-6 *aarthis* being waved in unison - by coincidence all of them seemed to be in perfect sync with each other. The head priest came very close to Swami and performed *aarathi* just as he would to the idols! Swami smiled beautifully at him and told him to be at a little distance! Then He retired for the evening.

### **June 28, 2008 – Pattabhishekam Ceremony on the concluding day of Rama Sudha Saptah**

On the morning of June 28 was the scheduled *Pattabhishekam* - the ceremony where Lord Rama is crowned as the ruler of Ayodhya and the Supreme master of the three worlds. A procession stood in readiness at the Gopuram gate of the Mandir. It was about 9:00 a.m. and Swami came on the chair for the *darshan* round. He seemed in such a kind of detached state and a gentle smile kept dancing on His lips. We often think it is our good fortune to

have His *darshan* on holy days. In fact, it is the other way: Anyday we have the good fortune of having His *darshan*, becomes a holy day!

Swami completed the *darshan* rounds and came on stage. Then, the proceedings began. There were three beautiful idols of Lord Rama, Lakshmana and Sita with a huge Hanuman statue below. The first part was the *Panchamrutha abhishekam*. The idols were bathed in honey, *ghee* (clarified butter), curd, sugar, tender coconut water and milk. As each item was reverentially poured over the idols, Swami kept looking at the devotees. Each item was brought to Swami for His blessings before they were poured over the idols. And each 'bath' was followed by a water bath through specially made silver ladles. Then the camphor and wicks would be lit and an *aarthi* performed to them. The whole hall vibrated with the holy feelings and energy of the Lord. It was such a thrilling sight to see the idols in all their beauty being thus bathed. This was followed by the *Theerthabhishekam*. Waters from the various holy rivers in India were poured over the idols. Swami listened intently to the names of the various rivers being read out. As each pot was taken to Him for blessing, He enquired into the names of the rivers. Even Chitravathi water was present. A beautiful and grand silver plate was held over all the idols. This plate was perforated and water was poured on it. It must have been a very special *Pattabhishekam* for Lord Rama as Sai Rama was presiding over it.

As the ceremonial baths were completed, the priests sought Swami's permission to curtain and cordon off the area of the sanctum sanctorum as the Lords had to be "dressed" up for the day's "crowning moment"! Swami agreed with a smile and a red curtain was drawn around the Lords. As Rama was 'hidden' from the devotees' view, Swami decided to grant a special *darshan*. He went through the inner portico and then went around the students for a *darshan* round. He took a few letters and granted many smiles, and *Abhayahasthas*. By the time Swami came on stage, the idols were almost ready. The *Alankaram* ("decoration" will be a simple translation for that word.) to the idols was on when Swami was requested permission to bring the *PattabhiRama* idol in procession. Swami agreed and the procession began. From the Gopuram gate, the idols arrived in a grand procession. The statues were brought on stage and installed.

The Vedic chanting had begun and was on in full flow on Swami's command. As the curtain was drawn, there was a loud applause as everyone marveled the grandeur and beauty of the idols. Then the actual *Pattabhisheka Mahotsavam* began. There was the *Parayanam* of the *Pattabhishekam Ghattam* with the *Shadashopachara* pooja. The various *aarthis* and the *Rajaasheervadam* were also performed. Swami kept smiling so beautifully and then blessed the crowns to be placed on the idols. Swami looked radiant as the idols were crowned. He looked the actual emperor and His wonderful mop of black hair swaying gently in the light breeze that had begun, looked like a Divine crown. When the entire ceremony was complete, Swami called the two main priests and simultaneously materialised thick gold chains with pendants for them. All the priests then went one by one to Swami and offered jasmine flowers at His feet. Swami blessed each one of them and gifted

watches to all of them. It was such a beautiful sight to see Swami's feet loaded with sweet scented jasmine flowers.

Swami then asked for the *bhajans* to begin. He blessed the *prasadam* to be distributed, which was sweet *pongal*, *Rava laddoo* and tamarind rice. As it was being distributed, He sat for about four *bhajans*. Then, receiving *aarthi* and blessing everyone, He left at about 11:30 a.m.

In the evening, the *Jhoolotsavam* had been planned. The idols were placed on a beautifully adorned and decorated *Jhoola* (swing). Swami arrived at 4:30 p.m. in the chair and cut through to the interview room after the ladies side. As soon as He arrived on stage, the priests offered the flowers to be placed on the idols for blessings to Swami. Then they offered a garland of lotuses at His feet. It was another beautiful sight to see the lotuses form a circumference around the Lotus Feet. With His blessings, began the *Jhoolatsavam*. As the priests gently rocked the swing and performed *poojas*, Swami sat watching. Then a singer was introduced. Sri. M. G. Venkataraghavan from Bangalore was blessed by Swami to sing *Keerthans*. He sang for about 45 minutes and was accompanied by *tabla*, *mridangam*, morsing, flute and the keyboard. As he sang, Swami went into the interview room for a short while and then returned. This time, He sat facing the *jhoola*. After a few more songs, Swami told the students to sing. The perfect host that He is, He asked the singer, "Can these children sing one or two songs?" Swami teaches lessons every moment. He is the supreme emperor and His every word defines Truth as every action of His defines *Dharma* (Righteousness). But He follows all the courtesies and respect with everyone.

The students started. The first song began with an *alaap* filled with *gamakas* (rapid modulations and undulations of the voice). The opening sequence itself drew appreciative and thunderous applause from the audience. As the song began, it was sharp contrast as the audience sat tight lipped and spell bound by the magic of the melody the student was weaving and casting a trance like spell on all. Swami kept the rhythm with a divine gleam in the eye. The thunder returned as the student completed his rendering. Two more songs followed. The final song was on Swami's Avatarhood in our midst and it was lapped up by the divine-thirsty audience with a steady and heavy clapping of hands. As the song concluded, on Swami's command, the *bhajan* with *alaap Sree Raghavam* began. What a sight it was! The students rendering soulful tunes... Swami swaying and swinging to the tunes... and the priests gently pushing the swing matching the rhythm of the songs. The smell of incense made the atmosphere heavenly.

Swami, in the meanwhile, blessed *prasadam* to be distributed to all. He also called the renowned artist and his troupe to the stage and honoured them by placing silk cloth on their shoulders. As the *bhajans* concluded, Swami called one of the students who incidentally had his birthday also on the same day and asked him, "Where are the holy grains?" The boy got up and rushing to Swami with a tray that he picked up from a nearby birthday boy, bent down his head to receive blessings. Swami blessed him and then pointing to two sevadal boys sitting near a pillar said, "They have not received the *prasadam*

that has just been distributed. Go give them *prasadam*." The boy did as he was told and all - the sevadal boys who were recipients of His love, the Lord, the boy who got the chance to serve the Lord at the Lord's behest and the devotees who were fortunate to see this expression of Love - were happy.

Swami then called two boys on stage and told them, "Sit here. We will have *Ramakatha*." Saying thus and blessing them, Swami went into the interview room. It was 6:45 p.m. then. Hurried preparations for these two students to render the musical *Ramakatha*, which Swami loves so much, were being made. Mikes were brought and the stage was set. Swami came out soon. He asked the boys to sit close to Him. Then, all of a sudden, Swami asked for His mike to be brought! He started with the famous, "premaswaroopulara..." and the claps that followed were deafening.

Then Swami did something so unique and special. He started singing, "Kausalyatmaja Ramacharan". Everyone soon realized that Swami was leading them in a wonderful *bhajan* session. And the follow too picked up to the enthusiasm levels that Swami was expressing. Swami then started singing the names of Lord Rama. The lines were all composed on the spot and so were the tunes. The *bhajan* that He was singing went on for 10 minutes or so. The lines were all about the wonderful name and form of Rama. As the last part of His *bhajan*, Swami started to sing "Rama Namame melu, Rama Chintane Chaalu" in the tune of "Kausalyatmaja Rama Charan." Then He asked the students to pick it up from there and gently closed His eyes. The *bhajan* tempo picked up and so did the volume and pitch. The whole hall was clapping mad and wild in devotion, and the singing was in such perfect unison and harmony. A thrill ran through one's spine and the sheer power and glory of united singing was demonstrated subtly by Swami. More than the lyrics or tune, what is most dear to Swami is collective singing. All must follow it and sing whole heartedly – that's all that Swami wants. As the *bhajan* concluded, it was about 7:05 p.m. and so Swami's mike was removed. After a few minutes, Swami asked for the mike again and began to speak! A summary of the discourse is given below:

*It is very important that we sing together. It is much more effective than individual singing. If a thousand people call out to Rama together, at least one cry will surely touch Him. Kausalya and Dasharatha had a daughter named Shanta. She was married away to a sage, and in fact she was the one who conducted the Putra Kameshti Yagna to beget sons for the 3 queens. When the pudding that emerged was distributed equally among the queens, Sumitra cried out, "Kausalya is the seniormost queen and her son will have a right over the throne. Kaikeyi's father has received a promise from Dasharatha that her son will be made king. Why should I beget children?" In that mood, she went to the terrace to dry her hair. Unlike these days, there were no fans then. She was drying it with scented smoke when an eagle came and carried away the pudding. Lamenting, she told this to the other two queens who wholeheartedly shared their shares of pudding with her. Thus were born the four princes. Since birth it was noticed that the twins - Lakshmana and Shatrughna - were crying all the while. Lakshmana was born of Kausalya's portion of the pudding and so was not satisfied and happy until he was placed*

*in the cradle next to Rama. So too, Shatrughna happily suckled his thumb  
when placed beside Bharatha.*

*When Ravana arrived to kidnap Sita, Lakshmana had drawn the protective line around the hut and none could touch her. In the first place, she had desired for the golden deer when she had given up all the luxuries of the palace. (She did this to teach everyone the lesson that when one gives up Rama-God- for the sake of Kama- desire- one is bound to suffer) Ravana then arrived and acted a nice drama that he was very hungry. He then kidnapped Sita. He placed her in Ashokavana with demonesses. But there too, Sarama, Shakini and Daakini took very good care of her. Ravana, though the overlord, did not have the courage to touch Sita. When he came, Sita threw a blade of grass at him and said, "You are not even this blade of Grace in front of my husband when it comes to worth!"*

*Meanwhile, Rama was given the jewels that Sita had dropped. He told Lakshmana to identify whether they were Sita's as his eyes were covered in tears. These days, every husband keeps a list of all the jewelry his wife has. But Rama never did so. Lakshmana said, " Oh brother! I can recognize only the anklets of Mother for I never saw beyond her feet - the feet I worshipped everyday!" Rama entrusted Hanuman to find Sita. And who was Hanuman? The eagle that took the pudding from Sumitra, dropped it in the mountains where there was a lady meditating. Who was that lady? (All said loudly, "Anjani Devi, Swami") Yes! Anjani Devi - not the cine star Anjali Devi! And so, Hanuman was an integral part of Rama. He went to Lanka with the only intention of pleasing his Lord. He searched for Sita in the private palaces of Ravana. There were many ladies and queens there and were minimally dressed. Yet Hanuman is the perfect Brahmachaari (celibate). He thought only of finding Sita.*

*Ravana, in his younger days had tried to force a girl into marriage with him. When he tried dragging her by the hair, she cut off her hair and cursed him, "I am coming again. Then the number of your people who will be destroyed will equal the hair in your hand." Thus she was born as Sita - Vaidehi. Vaidehi means the one without body attachment. She was found by Janaka and was not the daughter of his loins. Vaidehi was married away to Rama.*

*The Ramayana is full of secrets and great mysteries and power. Just take the name of Rama and all will be taken care of. It was Guru Nanak who first started the trend of singing as groups. All the names of the Lord are the same. God is one. Cows' colours are many, milk is one. Jewels are many, gold is one. So too, treat everyone alike. The Atma or soul in you is Rama. All are one, be alike to everyone. The whole world like the Ramayana is nothing but Rama and Hanuman. (Very significantly many interpreted this statement as the world is made up only of the Lord and devotee - nothing else ever exists. Swami was simultaneously speaking of both duality and non-duality). That's why in the bhajan that the students sang, Rama Lakshmana and Sita came in one line and the other line was on Hanuman. Hmmm...Swami has put you all to a lot of strain by speaking so much!*

Having enjoyed every moment of it, everyone vociferously shouted out, "No, Swami". Swami smiled at everyone. He seemed so happy and pleased and that reflected on every soul. The priests slowly went up to Swami and requested for a group picture with Him. Swami beamed a smile and said, "Surely". The pundits flocked and swarmed around Him like the bees do to a lotus or a rose. Swami then received *aarthi* and retired. It was 8:00 p.m. when the seat took Swami into the car.



## **SWAMI AND ME**

### **MOTHER SAI - MY HEART AND SOUL**

*By Mrs. Krishnaveni Nagisetty*

*An alumna of the Sri Sathya Sai University, Anantapur campus, Mrs. Krishnaveni Nagisetty graduated with a degree in Zoology in 1995. Her family had earlier come into the Sai fold in 1990. Mother of two boys, Krishnaveni currently lives in Connecticut, USA where she serves as a Pre-SSE teacher at the Farmington Sai Center.*

It was back in 1990 that Swami blessed our family with His 'visiting card'. My father's colleague gave us a picture bearing Swami's beatific image. That was the first time we had ever seen or heard of Swami. Right after that we started believing in Him as our saviour. We were deeply impressed with His message which was so simple: 'love all serve all'. And today as I look back, I can only be grateful for the inner faith that Swami bestowed upon us right at the outset. A mere recollection of those days thrills me, for we never entertained any doubt about His divinity. And ever since that day when Swami's picture entered our home, we plunged ourselves into *bhajans*, *balvikas*, *nagar-sankeertan*, service projects and other such Sai activities. For us, this progression was as natural as fish is to water. Around the same time, many miracles occurred and attracted a lot of people in our home town. It was sheer grace of Swami that our house in Semiliguda, Orissa (a state in the east of India) became a Sai center or a Samithi, as it is popularly known in India.

#### **Service with Love, Confers Supreme Joy**

My hometown is a village where a small fair is held every Sunday. The impact of Swami's presence in our lives and the power of His divine philosophy of expansion through loving service were such that within a month of the arrival of His picture in our house, we started feeding three people every Sunday in the verandah of our house. My Mother used to lovingly cook food for the *Narayans* or the 'embodiments of God' as Swami describes everyone, while I would serve them the food. My father used to randomly pick the *Narayans* from the fair. Slowly, the number of these guests increased to five and then to seven. Gradually, even other people started coming to lend a hand with the cooking, while others began to help us get the provisions for preparing the meal. Over the years, the idea has caught on so much so that today, with His grace and inspiration, my parents are blessed to feed over 80 *Narayans* in a week! Even medical camps are being conducted now on a regular basis to serve them. This, I believe, is truly one of Swami's miracles of love. He is working through us, connecting us to others so that they too can experience love in its purest form. We can only feel fortunate to serve as His instruments. The experience of serving our needy brothers and sisters has conferred on us the highest joy.

## **Town Blessed with Sai Spiritual Centre**

In 2006 a huge Sai Spiritual Centre was constructed in Semiliguda. It was very gratifying to see our small hometown become a spiritual centre for Sai activities, with spiritual retreats taking place once or twice a year. Four to five hundred people now throng to participate at these retreats.

Today, the Sai Centre at Semiliguda has undertaken many service projects, expanding their activities to even the neighboring villages. The Sai volunteers reach out to the villagers there, conducting *bhajans* and teaching them about cleanliness. They also distribute clothes and conduct medical camps.

There are times when I go back home to my village and feel a bit disappointed that the place does not even have a decent shopping facility. But I immediately correct my thoughts and remind myself that Swami has given us blessings which measure far beyond such superficial desires. It is only because we lived in a developing village that we were and, for that matter, still are able to serve so many people so effectively. That my parents have been bestowed with so many opportunities every other day to serve the society only makes me more grateful to Swami. Opportunities are galore when the intent is strong. My father of late has also started giving acupressure treatment to patients. It is not said in vain that no work escapes God's eyes, however small it may be. True to these words, Swami appeared in my mother's dream and appreciated my father's efforts. To quote His exact words in Telugu, Swami said: "*chaala manchi pani chestunnaru*" (*He is doing very good work*). It is no surprise that our small village is now resounding with the divine name of 'Sai Ram'. When I think of these astounding blessings and experiences, my shallow desires fall by the wayside.

## **My Education at Anantapur**

It was through one of my cousins that I learnt about Swami's college in Anantapur. My joy knew no bounds, when I heard this. I started praying intensely to Swami that I should not pursue my studies anywhere but in His college. It was a very competitive entrance exam and when I got through it successfully, my family was actually astonished! Needless to say, I was on cloud nine!

But in a few days, reality set in. I had never been away from my mother and like any other girl of my age was very attached to her. The year I joined Anantapur, we had the Summer Course in Brindavan. All my relatives including my grandmother had told my mother that I would most likely return home, for I will not be able to bear this separation. Honestly, what they said was quite true. I did want to go back to my mother. But on the night when I was indulging in such thoughts, Swami came in my dream. Consoling me, He said, "Why worry, when I am here to take care of you!" This gave me courage and confidence that I could live away from my physical mother and stay with Mother Sai. If it were not for this divine motivation from Swami, I would not have been able to study in His college. I am very much indebted to Mother

Sai, who gave me the love of thousand Mothers and at the same time also educated me. After the summer course, when my mother was returning to Orissa she was very sad at the thought of returning without me. She was on her way back in the bus, when out of the blue she had a vision. She saw Swami in a white robe with His hand raised to bless her and assure her that I would be fine. And from that moment onwards, my mother did not miss me. How could she after getting assurance from the Divine mother!

These were and still remain the most priceless days of my entire life. Though my stay in Anantapur was very short, it taught me great lessons. The teachers were very good. They not only taught us secular knowledge but also imparted spiritual knowledge, which I can confidently confide is helping me to thrive in the outside world even today. As a student I remember being very fascinated by the way our teachers lead their lives. I was very inspired by their devotion to Swami and their dedication to work. One of my botany teachers told us that if we find fault in others, it means that the fault is within us and that was why we see it in others. These words have left an indelible mark in my heart. Even today, when I find faults in any person, I try to see it in myself. Such simple yet important lessons were many in my life as a student in that holy campus.

The description of my college days would be incomplete without a mention of the other students there. The girls in the Anantapur campus were really amazing. The seniors were very loving and caring; they helped all of us in many different ways. They were quite selfless and would be ready to sacrifice anything to help other girls. In this context, I wish to share one instance. Once, after we had returned to Anantapur from one of our treasured trips to Puttaparthi, we were all very sad. Coming back to Anantapur, leaving Swami behind in Puttaparthi was always a difficult thing to do. To add to it, the travel had also drained us of energy completely; we were all very tired. But the girls who were in charge of serving dinner would, despite being tired themselves, be up and ready to serve us dinner! All the girls used to sacrifice a lot for each other and this I am sure would have not gone unnoticed by Swami.

### **Silence is God, Talk Less to Live in Bliss**

Swami says, "Silence is the key to great power, domain, harmony, health and perfection of every phase of your world. Practicing silence is the secret of all attainment."

I never knew what silence really means before I came into Swami's fold. I also didn't know that talking too much is dangerous. Swami repeatedly mentions in His discourses to reduce our habit of excessive talking. Swami says if we are indulging in talk, we are also forcing the other person to talk. And that is a sin. Besides, in doing so we also lose energy and memory power. Instead we should utilize the time in thinking of Swami. When we talk unnecessarily, there is also a chance of hurting others' feelings. Inspired by this, I used to observe the vow of silence on all Thursdays. This was the routine during my entire stay at Anantapur; sometimes for two continuous days I would maintain silence. While the teachers never knew that I was onto something like this, it is worth a mention that not even once was I asked any question on these

days. And if any teacher did ask me something, the bell, which would indicate the end of the period, would invariably ring at that time. By Swami's grace, my personal vow of *mouna vratha* or silence was never broken.

My stay in Anantapur was genuinely a divine blessing from Swami. It has been such an indescribable experience to spend those precious years at Swami's feet.

### **The Omniscient Swami**

Once in 1997, while I was doing the security service at Puttaparthi as an old student, I was given the duty at the back gate of the darshan ground. Swami was in the verandah along with the VIPs and boys. He was talking to all of them and was even joking with them. Seeing that, I could not help thinking that Swami always spoke to the boys in the verandah but never to me. This thought brought tears in my eyes. Swami would have certainly heard the rumblings of my heart.. Immediately, He walked from the verandah towards His residence. While He usually went back only after the *bhajans* were over, on that particular day, Swami started well before the bhajans concluded. As Swami walked past me, He looked at me and asked, "Where are the B. Ed girls?" My prayers had been answered! I was really astonished, but was very happy. He had talked to me for just two minutes. My heart had cried yearning for Him. The omniscient Lord had read my mind and spoken to me! It was a thrilling experience and has always reminded me that Swami is always in the know of all our thoughts and actions..

### **Transforming my Husband**

In one of the interviews to Anantapur students, Swami had said that He will be present in our in-law's house even before His students step into the house and that He will always protect them." It was this constant thought that gave me courage to go to my in-laws house after my wedding. I had never been to their house before that. My parents had brought a picture each of Shirdi Baba and Sathya Sai Baba as they wanted to send the laminated pictures along with me to my in-laws house. But when my mother was bringing the photos inside, my mother-in-law did not allow her to bring it into the house. She forbade my mother because she thought bringing the photos would bring bad luck to them. My in-laws were not believers in both the Sais. So, you can imagine my happiness when I saw an idol of Shirdi Baba in their house. Swami was indeed present there even before I had come!

Ever since, I was married, I have constantly prayed to Swami that my husband and my in-laws should also develop devotion to Him. Compassionate that Swami is, He heard even this prayer of mine.

Everyday, when my husband got up in the morning, he would look at his own face in the mirror. This was a routine he followed so as not to blame others if his day went bad. One day, he saw Swami's face in the mirror instead of his! He was amazed. He pinched himself but continued to see Swami's face in the mirror for one entire minute. And the same day, he got a job offer from a US-

based company.

My husband had to leave for the United States the very next month. In US, while he was boarding a plane to California, Swami granted him a *darshan* physically, by appearing on the runway with hands raised in a blessing gesture. Those two incidents had a great transforming impact on my husband's life and brought him into Swami's fold. That was enough to make my husband a devotee of Swami.

My husband now reveres and respects Swami very much. Swami is everything to him. In the beginning of our marriage, I didn't have the courage to tell him about Swami's teachings, but after he had this miraculous *darshan* of Swami, I began to share my experiences with him.

My husband never drank milk and to compensate for that he used to drink coffee a lot. But a few months after our wedding, when I told him that Swami doesn't want us to drink too much tea or coffee because it was an addiction, he simply let go of it. Since that day he has never touched coffee and now he drinks only milk. He doesn't do anything without Swami's consent. Though a very competent computer engineer, I remember he used to get very stressed about his projects before. But now, he offers not only every act but also the fruits of his actions to Swami. All his tensions and worries have disappeared. Such transformation in so little time only Swami can bring about. Tears roll down my cheeks when I recollect these memories of how Swami transformed my husband.

In days that followed, my husband had many dreams of Swami. The Lord started talking to him through these dreams and guided him personally in all his endeavors. So much so that, he is now a staunch devotee of Swami! In the year 2000 when I had come to India, my husband was not very happy as he was left all alone in the house. One night he skipped his dinner and went to sleep on an empty stomach. That night Swami came in his dream and consoled him saying that He was always there for him. Swami, then, went into our kitchen, made *dosas* (a south Indian dish) on the pan and fed him two *dosas* with His own divine hands. Believe it or not, my husband later confessed to me that, he felt really full after that divine meal! Who would not after God himself decides to feed you?

But my husband's transformation did not stop with that. Of late, he has even taken to learning all the *slokas* (hymns) and vedas which I had learnt in Bala Vikas. He also does the morning and night prayer that we used to say as students in Anantapur. Both my husband and I chant the vedas and sing *bhajans* daily in our house. I am very happy and grateful to Swami for this miracle in our lives, as it has made our lives so much more happy and peaceful.

### **Swami – The Core of my Life**

For all these experiences and the joy that has been bestowed on us, I will forever remain indebted to Swami. The gift of the awareness of His holy

presence in our lives has shielded us from the ups and downs of the transient world. I cannot imagine our lives without Swami! Swami is our heart and our soul.

May we always remain at His sweet Lotus Feet.

Sai Ram!

## THE NEUROSCIENTIST DISCOVERS NEW LIFE AT HIS FEET

*By Dr. P. Shashidharan*

*Dr. Shashidharan is a Neuroscientist and Associate Professor of Neurology at Mount Sinai School of Medicine, New York. He first came to Swami's fold in 1987 and since then has visited Prashanti Nilayam several times. He has also participated and chaired scientific conferences at the Sri Sathya Sai University. An active Sai worker, he has served as President of Sai Center of Flushing in New York, and also as Regional Devotional Coordinator of the Sri Sathya Sai Organisation of the Mid-Atlantic Region.*

Reflecting on the bygone days of childhood and youth, religion to me was nothing more than a facade; it was an extension for socializing. Having witnessed people claiming spiritual powers and deceiving the innocents for monetary benefits, only confirmed my belief that religion was a phenomenon concocted by the weak minded. Having grown up in Hyderabad (the capital of Andhra Pradesh), I had heard about Sai Baba. I strongly and firmly believed if there was God, He cannot be in human form; an idol was more acceptable and in line with what our ancestors have embedded in our minds. I had thought there should be more mystery surrounding such a phenomenon. Any derogatory write up of Sathya Sai Baba satiated my unfounded dislike for this "God". However, I now realize that it was my ignorance clouding my rational thinking that deprived me of realizing the divinity of the Sai Avatar then.

### **The Skeptic's Journey to Sai Begins...**

After completing my studies, I went to the United States and a year later I got engaged. I was shocked to learn that my wife and her entire family were staunch devotees of Sathya Sai Baba as revealed by my mother-in-law, but she was magnanimous enough to tell me, "You don't have to believe in Him, but when you have your divine experiences, don't deny His divinity". She requested me to write a letter to Swami, and since I didn't want to be disrespectful to her I wrote a single sentence, and mailed it out. The sentence was more of a challenge that I would come and visit Him if the content of my letter materializes. It was the commencement of the divine intervention as things started unfolding in a matter of weeks, but it was conveniently brushed aside by my egoistic mind as coincidental.

My wife's first request immediately after marriage was to make a trip to Prashanti Nilayam to seek the blessings of Swami. I obliged her, and six days after marriage we flew to Puttaparthi. Upon reaching there I was not very impressed with the ashram life, particularly in the late 80's, and it was definitely not my idea of a honeymoon. Waiting in the long line for hours to get a good seating for *darshan* to see my wife's God was mind-boggling, but the resentment was contained. Finally, we were ushered in and I was seated in the last row. Swami went around and looked in my direction from a distance, and Swami's eyes met mine. Swami continued to stare at me, and I felt very uncomfortable, and just wanted Him to go away, but He would not. My super

ego was deflated when I offered *pranams* (obeisance) to Him, and finally He walked away towards the Mandir.

That was my first *darshan* of Swami. However, the first meeting with the Divine did not have any impact on me at all - at least that was my conviction at that time. Back in USA, I requested my wife not to place Swami's picture in any place visible in the house, but she could keep His picture in a closet and pray to Him. Without resistance, she complied as she felt strongly that all this would change someday.

One day, in May of 1988, I woke up around five in the morning with a dream of Swami. In the dream, Swami conveyed several messages. I immediately narrated the happening to my wife, and later on to my mother-in-law who lives in Singapore; they were extremely happy. I couldn't rejoice to a similar degree, as for me it was just a dream. We were living in New Jersey at that time, and as I was driving to work the same day, I noticed a sign that Swami had shown me in the dream; the sign indicated a highway number that was leading to New York. The following week, I got a call from New York, asking if I was interested in taking up a Fellowship in the Medical Center. I discussed it with my wife and she convinced me to accept the position. What alarmed me even more was the fact that the salary offered was also exactly as was indicated by Swami in the dream, and the offer was more than what was originally advertised. Further, Swami had also indicated to me in the dream that I will never have to look back and there won't be any competition in my work.

### **A Dream Comes True!**

True to His blessings, I rose to the level of Associate Professor of Neurology, and never had to look back. This was a jolt and I was beginning to see His divinity, but was not convinced enough to accept Him as the Avatar, but this was definitely the initiation into accepting Swami into my life. We moved to New York, and without a second thought, to my surprise I placed Swami's picture in the altar. On an occasion, when we visited the Hindu temple in New York, my wife was overjoyed to learn that Sai *bhajans* are conducted in the premises every Sunday, and she was insistent that we go for the *bhajans*, and hence we started regularly attending the *bhajan* sessions.

### **Drawn by the Beauty of Bhajans**

During my wedding, my mother-in-law had indicated to me that I had a good voice and that I should consider singing *bhajans*. My instant reaction to that was to avoid *bhajans*! But, despite all these negative notions about religious activities, I had always enjoyed devotional music from a very young age. And now I had this urge to sing *bhajans*. I voluntarily started learning Sai *bhajans* and there has been no giving up since then. Music to me now is only Sai *bhajans*. It is always ringing in my ears and humming in my throat. My quest for *bhajans* is an obsession that cannot be satiated. Thanks to Radio Sai, now it is round the clock listening to *bhajans* at home and at work.



Life was moving along and we had two children. We participated in weekly *bhajans*, and I started taking an active role in the activities of the Sai Group in Flushing, New York. On most days after *bhajans*, we would meet up with friends to socialise. With the passing of days and getting more and more convinced of Swami's divinity, I felt a strong urge that we should move beyond *bhajans* and the small Sai Group should become part of the Sathya Sai Organisation of USA. This, I thought, would enable us to get involved in service activities, Sathya Sai Education programs, and these activities can be done in a more organized manner along the guidelines of the Organisation.

However, this proposition was met with strong opposition from majority of the senior members who did not see any reason for this change. But none of the hindrances could stop my determination to pursue the goal, as I knew that I was just an instrument in His divine hands carrying out His Will. However, at the same time, hurting the sentiments of elders filled me with guilt. I started introspecting whether the course of actions was in any way self-centered and this filled me with anguish and frustration.

### **Awaiting His Green Light**

I needed some sort of positive reinforcement before I could go forward, and so, on a Thursday *bhajan* session at home I prayed to Swami to show me a sign. The moment I had this thought, a flower from the *Padhukas* (which was blessed by Swami in 1997) flew into the air and landed on the floor. I couldn't believe my eyes; I can understand a flower falling from pictures, and explain it is because of gravitational force, but what I witnessed defied the law of gravitation. The flower went up in the air and came down. My wife and sister-in-law were giving chorus to the *bhajan* '*Sakshath Parabhrama Sai...*' with their eyes closed, and when they opened their eyes they saw the flower on the floor and not on the *Padhukas*. They thought I dropped the flower on the floor instead of placing it on the *Padhukas*. When they heard what had happened, they were very happy.

Swami had given me the green signal, and all I wanted was His blessings to carry out this mission. With a group of devotees who believed along the same lines, we decided to go forward with the formation of the Center. Swami once again reassured me that I was on the right course by showering the pictures in our altar at home with a viscous liquid. This phenomenon lasted for about a week. This was the first time I had witnessed such a paranormal phenomenon. As a neuroscientist, I am always in the pursuit of evidence and explanations, but this was happening right before my eyes in my own home, and so, the 'Doubting Shashi' had no go but to succumb.

During this exact time, the original Sai Center was closing down, and this came as a blessing in disguise and we immediately agreed to take over this Center, and continue the activities. By Swami's grace I was chosen as the first President of the Center. But we were still facing a lot of obstacles; when the senior members moved out we lost instrument players and many good lead singers. I wrote a letter on June 25, 2000 to Swami saying, "*I am coming to*

*have Your darshan and if I did everything right Swami should speak to me". I wanted this reassurance once again and this time directly from Swami.*

### **Parthi Pilgrimage to Know His Will**

On July 6, 2000, we arrived in Puttaparthi, and since our kids were very small we decided to stay in a cottage outside the ashram. As we were entering the cottage, the porter hit a bush with the suitcase and dislodged a big beehive. Thousands of bees were set loose on us, and I was stung in the hand and near the eyes. Since it was close to 3 pm, we decided to go for *darshan*, and rushed to Sai Kulwant Hall; it was hot and I was miserable. I didn't have time to take medication and my eyes and hand had started swelling. Luckily my son's plight was not that bad. Somehow I sat through Swami's *darshan*. I inferred that I was being taught a lesson for running after physical comforts, and soon realized staying outside the ashram wasn't a good idea, and since then we always stayed only in the ashram. When I came to terms with ashram life, I found it more peaceful and enjoyable than anywhere else.

Since it was Guru Poornima time, the whole place was crowded with thousands of devotees and Sai Kulwant hall was packed to capacity; many devotees were actually standing outside. I had my doubts about getting an opportunity to talk to Swami; how will He know me among the tens and thousands of people seated there? I thought. I was fortunate enough to get the first row for the afternoon *darshan* on July 7. Swami's boundless Love and Compassion were again in evidence and in abundance. Since there was one more hour for *darshan*, I decided to write a letter in detail about various matters in particular about the Center. I reasoned that if Swami talks to me I will not have enough time to ask all that I wanted to ask Him. One of the things I wanted to know was if Swami approved the way we conducted ourselves in the formation of the Center. I needed reassurance in this aspect and this would be ascertained if Swami speaks to me and takes my letter – I was thinking to myself "If He did not then I would take it as an indication that my actions were wrong". So many conditions and demands from the Lord – liberty one can take only with this Universal Mother!

Swami came for *darshan* at 3 pm and He took letters from two ladies, and then materialized Vibhuthi for one of them. He came to the men's side, spent a few seconds speaking to the students, materialized Vibhuthi again, now for an elderly gentleman, and then went to the opposite side, towards where we were seated. After a while, Swami turned to return to the Mandir and my heart sank. I thought Swami did not approve of the Center formation – all the previous reassurances were just a figment of my own imagination. As I was thinking this, Swami turned in my direction as though He had heard my thoughts! I prayed silently in my heart "Swami, please come to me and talk to me".

### **Face to Face with God**

Then it all happened, Swami turned around and instead of going to the Mandir, looked in my direction, walked straight to me and then smiled, His

eyes fixed on me. I gave a bundle of letters to Him wrapped in a newsletter I was carrying with me for His blessings. Now, with a gentle smile on His lips and in a soft voice, He said in Telugu "*okka okkati vidi vidiga ivvammu*" (Give the letters, one by one, separately). I unwrapped the newsletter and handed the letters, one at a time, and Swami patiently received each one smiling at me.

I was directly facing Swami and looking into His eyes; I was in total bliss, savoring every moment. It was a spectacular moment to directly look into Swami's face, His crown of hair, and His beautiful and compassionate eyes. He showered on me the love and compassion of a lifetime. I was dumbfounded and forgot myself and all that I wanted to ask Him; thankfully I had put everything that I wanted to ask Him in writing. But in the meanwhile, I gathered courage to ask Swami about a cancer patient. Swami nodded His head and told me He knows all about it and He will take care of her and showed His *Abhayahastha* (Hand raised in blessing).

Swami then looked at the Young Adults folder that we had made with a young Swami sitting on the lotus. I noticed Swami reading what was written on the folder, and He once again smiled at me in acknowledgement. While this was going on, my brother-in-law (this was his first trip to Puttaparthi) was holding onto Swami's Lotus Feet and enjoying the *Padanamaskar* to his heart's content. Before coming to Puttaparthi, he visited Shirdi and was very upset that he could not touch Shirdi Baba's feet, and my sister-in-law told him to pray to Bhagavan and He will grant his wish, as both Shirdi and Sathya Sai Baba are same. Swami now amazingly fulfilled my brother-in-law's wish. Finally, I was at peace and guilt-free. My Universal Mother had shown Her approval in myriad ways, and I needed no further assurance. I was convinced that it was His will that prevailed, and I was merely an instrument in the entire process of formation of the Center.

All the Center activities progressed well, and by Swami's Grace a young boy joined the Center who was an excellent *tabla* (percussion) player. The membership grew and became one of the largest Sai Centers in New York. The devotees conducted all activities such as Devotional, SSE classes, Service projects; the Young Adult programs too had good participation. In August 2004, I was nominated as the Regional Devotional Coordinator for the Mid-Atlantic region, which has 34 Sai Centers. Initially, I was reluctant to accept it as I had doubts about my spiritual knowledge and ability to take up such a responsible position.

But as always, my Mother Sai never failed me. He again came to reassure this confused, apprehensive child. In the early hours, I had a vision of Swami, in which I heard Swami calling me. He then materialized vibhuti for me. I put the vibhuti on my forehead and ate the rest. As I was walking away from Swami, He called me back saying "*Ekda pothunnavu? Ikkadara!*" (Where are you going? Come here!). When I approached Swami, He said, "*Padanamaskaram theesuko*" (Take blessings by touching My feet). I took *Padanamaskar* and looked at Swami, and asked if He would grace me with an interview too. Swami said, "*Anni oka rojey kavaali, inka okka rojura*" (You

want everything on the same day; come back another day). This vision of Swami convinced me that I was only an instrument, He is the doer and the position that He has bestowed upon me is His blessings. So, I happily accepted the responsibility.

I have since completed two terms and am immensely grateful for being given this opportunity to serve the Lord. This is greater than any other accolade I will ever receive. It has been a great learning experience and spiritual journey for me.

In 1988, I had a dream of Swami wherein He held my hand and led me to a place where many *ritwiks* (Vedic priests) were chanting and performing *homam* (a sacrifice). There were several sacrificial fires set up; such scenes I had seen only in some movies depicting Ramayana or Mahabharata. I wondered since the first dream came true whether the second dream would also realise. I was skeptical about it since I didn't consider myself to be that fortunate to have such close contact with Swami, and re-enactment of scenes seen in epic Ramayana is impossible. It took 18 years for me to see the second dream realise.

### **A Dream Relived**

In August 2006, I was part of an International Scientific Delegation that went to give lectures at Sri Sathya Sai University. Fortunately, during that time, the Athi Rudra Maha Yagna was about to commence in Prasanthi Nilayam. All the delegates were given opportunity to sit in the veranda; I thanked Swami for our great good fortune. On August 7, after I was seated and looked around, I observed the *homa gundams* (sacrificial pits) being constructed; the whole place was being transformed into a hermitage. I saw dozens of *ritwiks*. The whole milieu seemed very familiar to me; it felt as though I had witnessed a ceremony like this before – was it *déjà vu*? Instantly I recalled my dream in 1988, and was surprised; the entire arrangement around the Mandir was like a replay. However, in the dream Swami held my hand and lead me to the *Maha Yagnam* (sacrifice) - I started getting goose bumps. I started wondering if Swami would really come near me; will His divine touch be on me for real?

Next morning (August 8, 2006) the conference was to be inaugurated, and all the delegates were seated in the Mandir veranda waiting for Swami's *darshan*. Swami got off near us and we had a wonderful *darshan*. He spoke to two of the prominent organizers of the Athi Rudra Maha Yagna. In the meanwhile, Prof. Krupanidhi, who was sitting in front of me, turned back and told me if Swami agrees we will go up one by one and seek His blessings before the inauguration of the conference. I waited anxiously as Prof. Krupanidhi spoke to Swami. The Professor looked in my direction and nodded, I immediately stood up and walked towards Swami, but He turned His attention once again to the details of the Yagna and I was asked go back to my place. I was surely disappointed.

In a few minutes, Swami stood up and looked in my direction. My hands were folded, but in sign language I asked Swami if I could come to Him. With His

*Abhayahastha* Swami said, “*Koorcho*” (sit down) and slowly walked towards me. Prof. Krupanidhi introduced me to Swami in a formal way, Swami said, “*Chala Santhosham*” (very happy), I explained to Swami the research I was conducting and asked for His blessings. He said, “*Manchidi, chala Santhosham*” (good, very happy). I gave a letter to Swami and in the process touched His divine hands and took *Padanamaskar*.

Apparently several people took many pictures at that time. However, in none of the pictures I could be seen with Swami, except the one in which Swami was looking at me and I was facing Him. The significance of this picture came to me like a total surprise. Once in the past, I was looking at pictures of devotees taken with Swami. A thought had come to me at that time “*that if at all I have an opportunity in this life time to have a picture with Swami, I don't want to pose with Him but face him*”. This subtle thought that came to me was all forgotten and was never mentioned to anyone. When I saw the picture in which I was facing Swami, and not posing with Him, it brought home the message that even the subtlest thoughts are heard by Swami, who resides in our hearts. It was indeed a great blessing to be part of the Athi Rudra Maha Yagnam, which was an opportunity of a lifetime although we went in the guise of attending the scientific conference.

After lighting the lamp for the commencement of the Athi Rudra Maha Yagnam, Swami returned to His seat, turned His face, looked at me and smiled. I felt as though Swami was saying to me that the vision I had 18 years ago, was His blessings. If not for the conference, I would not have gone to have Swami's *darshan* as I was under tremendous pressure at work. My wife's belief and faith in Swami is much stronger, and she insisted that I should go and see Swami; she was confident that with His blessings everything will be fine, and indeed Swami did take care of my problems of mundane existence.

Swami's omniscience and omnipresence was once again revealed to me in another dream. On Vijaya Dasami day (October 21, 2007) in the early hours when I had a vision of Swami, He put His right hand on my head and blessed, and then He leaned towards me and whispered in my ears that I ate ham (pork). When I heard this I woke up and looked at the clock; it was 5.15 in the morning. I started reflecting on my dream and realised that when I attended an international meeting a few months ago in Rome, there was a lunch buffet served for the delegates. After confirming with the Italian server (who did not understand English) that there was no meat in any of the items served on my plate, I started to eat and noticed it didn't taste vegetarian. An Italian Scientist, who was also a vegetarian, ate the same food by mistake and told me that there was pork in it; I immediately discarded the food. This vision of Swami convinced me that Swami is with me all the time, and that he knows all my thoughts, words and actions. I reasoned that Swami wanted to reinforce my faith by telling an incident from the past that was known only to the Italian scientist and me.

## His Ever Present Guidance

Swami's unconditional love not only changed my outlook towards the world but has also rose to be the guiding force in my personal and professional life. In my professional life, I used to get perturbed when things happened contrary to my expectations, but I started heeding Swami's constant advice of performing to the best of my ability and leave the rest at His lotus Feet. At times, my colleagues are surprised at my attitude and sense of equanimity and often mistake it to be lack of enthusiasm. But now I feel more confident in pursuing any task, for now I know that Swami will not only guide me, but also rescue me if the need arises. Whenever I have encountered difficulties in my work, Swami has guided me, either through some messages or dreams. Swami has said, *"Even if you give up on me I will not give you up"*. My Lord has and will never fail me. Whatever I have accomplished professionally and personally is nothing more than His sublime love and grace.

Although I came to Swami very late in my lifetime, I believe it was my previous *karma* that it took so long to recognize the divinity walking on two feet. Even as a child I believed in all religions being same; they preach the same doctrines and should not be discriminated for their beliefs. Although my parents were non-vegetarians, I refused to eat non-vegetarian food even as a child. I believe all these qualities that developed very early in my childhood, were helpful and laid the ground work in my transformation from a non-believer in Sai to a staunch devotee and a humble instrument in the hands of our beloved Swami. Swami says, *"I only echo. If you accept Me and say yes, I too respond and say "yes, yes, yes!" If you deny Me and say "no", I also echo "no". Come, examine, experience, and have faith; that is the method of utilizing Me."*

Indeed that is exactly what I did, in every step I took towards Swami. I was skeptical and wanted convincing evidence and reassurance to go forward in my belief. These inquiries convinced me in the divinity of our Lord. Although non-believers in the family and among friends ridicule me, I don't heed to their criticisms and avoid arguments. Coming to Swami made me a better human being. Now I neither get elated at good fortune nor become miserable when things go bad. I am fully convinced that my Swami is my pillar of strength in all times, good or bad. Although I teach neuroscience, I make it a point to bring human values in some context, and make students understand the importance of following these values. I pray to Swami to give me the guidance and blessings to work for the service of mankind. Jai Sai Ram!

## H2H SPECIAL

### MESMERIZING MOMENTS WITH THE DIVINE MASTER

#### Interview with Mrs. Rani Subramanian - Part 4

*A devout and dedicated devotee for nearly sixty years, Mrs. Rani Subramanian, who originally hails from Tamil Nadu, came to Bhagavan Baba as early as 1950. Eighty five years old now and fondly called 'Rani Maa' by Bhagavan, her life is a treasure-chest of scintillating experiences from yester years. A sincere spiritual seeker, she currently resides in Puttaparthi and shares her elevating memories with eager devotees with deep conviction, insight and faith. This is the fourth part of her wonderful reminiscences, continued from the previous issue.*

#### Divine Personal Prescriptions

Swami has said: “Those who obey my instructions, I bless them.” But to each one of us, Swami gives a different instruction. For instance, I wanted to do namasmarana with japamala (chanting with the aid of the rosary). **And Swami told me: “No! No *japamala* for you; Do only breath.” But, when my sister said, “Swami, I want the *japamala*,” He said, “Yes, you can do that!” And later when I wanted to get into some kind of an activity He said, “No need! You meditate!”**

During those days - most of the time – the devotees had to do a lot of cooking during Dasara as there were no cooks then. Swami would feed hundreds of poor people during the festival and devotees from Madras and Bangalore would also help in cooking. The elderly ladies, who were well-versed in handling such situations, would dig pits like a trench in the ashram and burn firewood as there was no proper kitchen then. Devotees from Bangalore would bring huge vessels because we needed big vessels to prepare food for hundreds of people. So, this way all these devotees would participate and each one would help according to his/her capability. While devotees in the age group of 50-60 would mostly be in charge of the real cooking, others would assist in activities such as cutting vegetables, providing spices, etc. And this was all done under bright sun as there was no roof!

On one such occasion, I had just come to the ashram. My younger sister was already there. Swami used to call her Lilly! Swami came to my sister and said, “Hey, Lilly! Go and help Savitri *Amma*, she is cooking for the poor feeding; go and assist her.” I was also standing there, next to my sister. Then, my sister looked at Swami and asked, “Swami, what about her? Can she also come with me to help?” He said, “No. Rani Maa will be here only.” My sister then asked, “Swami! Why do you always send me for work but don't send Rani Maa? Please let her come, Swami.”

For this Swami replied by saying, “No, I am not sending her!” Puzzled by Swami’s response, my sister asked, “Why?” Swami then replied, “You are a *brahmacharini* (celibate); you need to work. Rani Maa is a *gruhastha* (householder), she has already done a lot of work in her house! She has been looking after her children and husband and all that! She comes here for spiritual *sadhana*; because she can’t do much there. She wants to meditate here, and evolve spiritually. She is seeking that from Puttaparthi and from Me. So, Rani Maa will be in the room and she will meditate.” Swami made the decision for me and told her: “I am not sending her!” It was the same with whatever activity I wanted to participate in. Whenever I talked about any activity, I don’t know why, but Swami always said, “No, not for you.”

Now what I want to convey here is that Swami is a very individual Guru! He doesn’t say, ‘Always worship Me!’ Whatever you are doing in the house, do it as if you are serving God. For a householder, that’s what He says, “Look upon the husband as God; don’t shout at the children; don’t get upset, talk nicely; whatever they say, take it with that awareness that they are Gods.” That’s the *sadhana* He put us on.

### **Speaking Up In the Family**

But once, Swami told me quite a different thing. I used to put up with whatever my husband used to say for coming to Puttaparthi. My husband was not against Baba but he couldn’t understand my frequent visits to see Baba. So, once, when he was dropping me at the train station, when I was coming to Puttaparthi, he asked me: “When are you going to come back?” I said, “I don’t know.” He said, “What do you mean by you don’t know! Who will know? You should know your own program!” I said, “I am sorry to tell you that we do not make any program of when to leave Puttaparthi because it is Swami who will decide that.”

That used to be the pattern in those days – always! We couldn’t buy tickets in advance. If for example, we bought a ticket for the 24<sup>th</sup>, Swami would say, “Go on the 1<sup>st</sup> of next month.” Who would be able to come and cancel the ticket? So, I told my husband, “I cannot make any program because it is subject to Swami’s decision! So, when it is time for me to go, He will tell me. I cannot decide.”

He said, “I don’t understand why you should be like that!” I said, “Swami is our Guru! I have to obey Him!” After this, when I reached Puttaparthi, Swami sent for me. I went upstairs. What followed then was another proof of Swami’s omnipresence. **Swami said, “Subramaniam said like this in the car...and you replied like this...” and He repeated the exact dialogues we had! He said, “Look! You are keeping too quiet! It is high time you started telling Subramaniam certain things about spiritual life and what is *dharma* (righteousness) and what is not *dharma* too! You must talk! Why are you being quiet?”**



I said, "Swami, I don't want any disputes – I don't like picking up a quarrel." He said, **"No! You have to do *dharma yuddha* (war of righteousness)! You are not fighting for any selfish reason. This is for your Guru – Obedience to your Guru! You must tell him and educate him, because he doesn't know - because he doesn't have a Guru. So, don't keep quiet. When it involves *dharma*, please talk. By being quiet, in a way, you are being selfish because you don't want to start a quarrel; you want your peace at any cost! That is wrong. Why was the Geetha preached? For *dharma yuddha*! You are not preaching to him but when he accuses you; you have to tell him what dharma is! You don't have to lecture! But you must educate when you are attacked!"**

Several times in my life this has happened – even with my mother-in-law before that. So, soon after this, I started explaining things to my husband too. He didn't know why Swami wrote letters and why I replied! He would ask: "What do you write?" He had no Guru-disciple concept at all! So Swami said: "You have to educate him. That is your duty! You are not doing anything wrong; you are doing what is right. If you do wrong, then of course you have to keep quiet."

### **Receiving His Tender Care in Whitefield**

After I had recovered from tetanus, I went to see Swami when he had come to Chennai. Swami spoke in length to my husband about my other *janma* (birth) and about His Andhra Pradesh trip. Swami even told him that once some naxalites wanted to kill Him and they were all sitting on tree-tops to attack. Swami said, "I went on a tour...the naxalites were there...perched on trees...nothing happened..."

Then, after He said all that, Swami came up to me and said, "Rani Maa, after that illness, you are in a very weak condition. Come to Whitefield, and stay with Me for some time. You have to pick yourself up! So don't go back yet, come to Whitefield and stay with Me in Brindavan ashram."

So I decided to go to stay in Brindavan ashram and also informed Swami about my tentative date of arrival. But, even before I reached the ashram Swami had instructed the lady volunteers that: "One person, Rani Maa will come and she will be sitting in the crowd. You will have to go and ask: 'Who is Rani Maa here? Swami wants you to come inside.'" Can you believe it? Swami had made such arrangements! So, they came and asked, "Who is Rani Maa?" But I had not reached there yet. I came a little later! In the meanwhile, the sevadal went back and told Swami, "Swami, we checked, but no Rani Maa has come!" Swami replied, "No! She is coming! Go back! She is a little late. Go and try again." He sent them back and by that time I had already come.

So, when I reached the ashram, one sevadal was asking in the crowd, "Is anybody called Rani Maa here? Please get up. Swami wants you to come in immediately!" So I went with her to Swami. Swami gave me a room to stay, but since I had also brought my daughter along I wanted to take His

permission. So I asked, "Swami, I have brought my daughter with me. Should I ask her to go back or should I keep her with me?" Swami replied, "Yes, you can keep Sheela with you; she will be helpful. You can bring her with you." Only then I took my daughter inside because without Swami's permission, you cannot take anybody inside.

### **The Ideal Devotee**

Then, one morning, during my stay there, Swami came to my room at around 7 o' clock and said: "Come with Me." My room was downstairs; it was like a suite, with a living room, a bedroom, an attached bathroom and a balcony. Swami's room was upstairs. He came down and saw that my daughter was sleeping in the other room, and did not want to disturb her.

**So, He took me to the balcony and asked, "What do you want? You ask Me and I will give it to you!" I wondered why Swami had suddenly asked me this question again! I said, "Swami, I want to be an ideal devotee." He said, "Do you know what you have to do?" I said, "No Swami. You please tell me what I have to do."**

**Then He said, "Obedience. One day, when you will come to see Me, I will receive you very nicely and talk to you; another day when you come, I might ask you, 'Who asked you to come? Please go! I may be very curt and rude! You must treat both evenly! There should be no difference! There must be equanimity for both the treatments! You shouldn't react. When I am kind, you are happy; and when I am not kind, you are unhappy! That is not the *lakshana* (characteristic) of a devotee.'"**

He then said, "Some time back, you used to come here, to Whitefield, to teach somebody a *bhajan*. Is it not?" I said, "Yes, Swami." I used to be with my sister in Bangalore, and would come to Whitefield to teach a foreigner a few *bhajans*. This lady was staying inside with Swami, when He was in Whitefield. But after Swami went to Chennai, she asked me if I could teach her a few bhajans. I happily obliged and used to come from Bangalore to teach her bhajans everyday.

This was the routine for quite some time, till Swami returned one day from Chennai. As usual I had gone to Whitefield to teach her, but she said, "Swami has come back! Today is my birthday; I am so lucky that He has returned from Chennai! Today I can't learn *bhajan*." That meant I had to return and sensing that she said, "But how can I send you back like that? I will go inside and ask Swami if you can come inside." No one was allowed inside without Swami's permission, so she went inside and asked Swami: "Swami, Rani Maa has come; she has been coming regularly to teach me *bhajans*. But today, I don't want to learn; I want to be with you. But, since she has come all the way from Bangalore, can I bring her inside?" Swami replied, "No! Ask her to go back."

Not expecting this response from Swami, she further quizzed, "Why Swami? Why can't she come?" She tried to argue with Swami! Another foreigner lady, whom I knew and who was also present there at that time inside asked

Swami, "She is your devotee too! Why don't you give her also your darshan Swami? Please let her come!" But Swami was firm. He said, "Nothing doing! I don't want that Rani Maa inside! Ask her to go back!"

So, the lady whom I had taught bhajan came out looking very sad. She told me, "Rani Maa, you will have to go back; we tried to tell Swami that we would like to have you inside, but He said no! So you will have to go back!"

I used to catch a train to return and then some other transport from there to my house. So, when I was going back, I thought in the train: 'Why did Swami do this? Does He have no love? He has no kindness? Swami shouldn't do this. After all, what does He lose by giving me Darshan? I would have been so happy, but He has denied me that. How can He do this?' This was only a thought and I did not mention it to anyone because I was traveling alone in the train. But immediately a next thought followed: 'No! I can't question Swami. After all, He is my Guru. And Swami says we shouldn't question our Guru. So whatever He says, I should accept that.' Saying this I consoled myself because I really did not understand why Swami had not let me in.

I could not believe it when Swami quoted this incident to me when I told him I wanted to be an ideal devotee! This had happened a few months ago! **Swami said, "You came and when you went back, in the train, you were thinking: 'How can Swami do this? Where is His Love? There is no Love!' That's how you were thinking in your mind; that was your first thought. And your second thought was: 'Oh! He knows best! He knows what to do, how can I question Him?' and you consoled yourself; but there was no understanding! You consoled yourself without understanding; but you were sad."**

**Swami then said, "Today I have come to tell you; your first thought should not have been there. Your second thought about: 'Swami knows everything!' should have been first. Your first thought about questioning Me: 'Why is He doing that', should have been cancelled. You are nobody to ask Me! The ideal devotee shouldn't ask. Your second, 'Swami knows everything' is right. Then your work is finished; you are an ideal devotee! So, to be an ideal devotee - no questioning the Guru!"**

This may explain why many devotees who kept coming here for years suddenly left Swami. They were all educated and people in good positions. But they didn't understand Swami! Swami has been constantly telling us in His lectures and in His interviews too: "Don't try to understand Me! It's a useless and a futile effort!" I remember an example Swami had given years ago to make us understand why it is difficult to understand him. He had said, "It is like counting the grains of sand on the beach!" Can we count the grains of the sand on the beach? It is an impossible task! And this is why we will never understand Him because it is a revelation and it does not come with an understanding. Who Swami is can never be known with our intellect, reasoning, questioning or reading or *sadhana*. Nothing will take us there! When He is pleased and happy with you, He will reveal Himself to you!

So, even if we try now and say that He is *Paramatma* (Supreme Being), remember we tend to forget it later and do many things that are not in harmony with His teachings. In this way, we fail Him as *Paramatma*! This is what Swami has been stressing here.

**“I am not important. What is important is My teaching.” - Baba**

My daughter once asked swami a question: “Swami, You have been so good to our family, we want the same Grace always; how can we keep that?” He used to call us very often for interviews, and would come and talk to us in our rooms. It was very special. So, my daughter asked Him: “Swami, the way you are treating us, will we always get your grace like this?” Swami replied, “You see, you are not getting grace by coming to Puttaparthi; or having my darshan; but, if you hold on to My teachings; you will get *sampoorna kripa* (complete Grace)! Hold on to My teachings and not to Me!”

If we hold on to Him, what will happen? We will try to possess Him! ‘Swami must look at me!’ That’s like possessing Him! You can’t tell Him what to do! **He said, “I am not important. What is important is My teaching.”** Swami told all this to my daughter in an interview.

In another interview, Swami told us that: **“If you can get inspiration from coming to Puttaparthi, then you should come. If you are disturbed, and you don’t get inspiration, then don’t come! Because this path needs inspiration constantly.”**

You see, if we are sad, despondent, and upset, we can’t do our best – *sadhana* wise. He said, “You must have a cheerful and a happy feeling all the time to do anything, and you must get inspiration to do that. When you get inspiration, you feel good. That is very necessary – always!” But the thought: “What will people think if I don’t go?” should not be taken into account. Those are not the main considerations. We must ask ourselves: “Am I inspired to go?” If the answer is ‘no’, then don’t come!

### **Seeking the Omnipresence of Sai**

In another interview in Prashanthinilayam, I had asked, “Swami, I don’t do any work for the Sathya Sai Seva Samithi in Chennai; is it right or wrong? As Your devotee, should I go and offer my services?” He replied, “Sathya Sai! Sathya Sai! You have not understood Me Rani Maa! I am not just Sathya Sai! The whole world is Me! Wherever you do good work, it reaches Me! It is high time you realized it! Why do you limit Me to Sathya Sai only? If you are not inspired to go there, don’t go! **Be wherever you want to be; but do good work. Wherever you are and whomsoever you do the good work for – Rama, Krishna or whatever – it doesn’t matter at all! It will reach Me only!**”

So these are all very profound matters! People limit Him to His physical body which He is now trying to change. See, that is why we get disappointed that: “Oh! Swami didn’t talk to me!” He says that one who has understood that ‘He is *antarayami* (the indweller) is really wise.’ He says: “I am listening! Don’t you

believe it?" Though you don't hear Him talking back, but He, the *antarayami*, is listening alright! Swami says in the 'Sai Darshan' book, when you are ready for Him, He will talk back to you from inside. So many devotees have got that experience! It's up to you to work up to that stage of consciousness of: **"Follow Me implicitly. All the time, be aware of My presence everywhere so that you will not hurt anybody. When you are aware of My presence, what will happen is, I will start working through you, and make you do the right thing."**

Suppose I feel like being rude to somebody or if I am not in the right mind, before I actually react my second thought will be: 'No! Mind your own business; don't say anything; be quiet!' It will come; because you are constantly practicing what Swami teaches. It may not be spontaneous all the time, but that practice will make it spontaneous in due course of time. It has to! That is the law of God!

Swami has said: "The closer you are; the more distant I will become physically!" That is one of His signs. Baba says. **"When I am close to you in the spirit, I will be very distant to you in the body. Because you have recognized My true nature. That's what I have come for! My main Mission is to awaken the inner Guru. The inner Guru is not outside; it starts with the outside Guru, but the outside Guru leads you to the inner Guru."**

That is the purpose of Swami's mission! Being a Guru, it's His duty to lead you to that. Otherwise, He is not a true Guru! He has not come to give you worldly things! He is trying to remove you from the world! He is giving all that to you because you are not yet ready for what He really wants to give you. Gradually, He will bring about disappointments. And when you will get fed up, He will give you all sorts of experiences and you will say: "Oh! I don't want these things; I am not getting anything out of all that." That state of mind He will surely bring. He will make things very difficult for you in the world, so you will not start liking the world. You will think: 'I better get away from all this *samsaara* (worldly life)!' That is one indirect way of teaching us *jnana* (wisdom)! 'The world can't give us anything! Only sorrows, problems and disappointments! Why am I after it?' These thoughts have to come from within! Swami will give everything we ask for, but remember the world cannot give you peace. If we think that the world can give us peace then that is ignorance! That the world cannot give us peace is *jnana*! That is knowledge!

If you have understood that, it is enough; then you should start to work on it. Swami had once told us: "You don't have to read too much! Read whatever is necessary for inspiration." He forbade us to read too many books. He instead said: **"Different authors will only confuse you with their contradictions! Great philosophical and intellectual discussions are of no use. If you want to read, read the lives of saints – any saint; Christian saint, or Muslim saint, or Hindu – they have gone on the path; they have done the spiritual journey; their path is very clear; they have known the pitfalls and the obstacles. Their life will indicate all the problems to you and how they ultimately came to be a good example."**

Some time back I used to go for Darshan once a week, but now I go only twice a month. In this regard Swami has said, "It's enough! You come, take My blessings; My Aura. Be with yourself; tell yourself: 'Swami, You are everywhere! You are in my house.' Then I will reveal that Truth to you! You have to practice it. If you limit Me to this hall, or this or that place, or even this Bhajan Hall, I will appear and you will be happy. But you would have limited me and you will not be able to experience My All-pervading spirit, the *Parabrahma*."

So, while Swami has been guiding us constantly, we have to practice as much as we can. But I find that this path is difficult and we have a long way to go.

## **SAI WORLD NEWS**

### **VALUES SWIRL IN THE VORTEX OF VIRTUES**

#### ***Toronto's Walk for Values 2008 binds diverse groups to improve themselves, their planet, and everyone else in between***

A rather unusual strain of global warming, defying the comprehension of the most seasoned meteorologists, struck the city of Toronto recently when it was inundated by a downpour of love that engulfed Canadians with tidal waves of selflessness and consideration, random acts of kindness and an appeal for a sense of social, environmental and spiritual renewal. This heart-warming phenomenon had its epicenter in the Sathya Sai School of Canada located in Toronto -- a unique learning model that promotes human excellence by balancing academic achievement with character education based on the five human values of Truth, Peace, Love, Right Conduct and Nonviolence.

#### **Meltdown in Downtown**

With the precision of a NASA take off, at sharp 11 AM on Sunday, May 25, 2008, under sunny skies, a comforting breeze and a perfect temperature of 24 degrees Celsius, Toronto's downtown core bloomed into a field of sunflowers swaying, singing, walking, talking and marching in blissful joy, determined to wake up the universal human values inherent in every heart. The virtues that form the core of the Sathya Sai School of Canada's unique Character Education program, the Sathya Sai Education in Human Values, became the talk of the town.

Men, women and children, wearing golden yellow T-shirts, exuded a positive energy and a collective resolve, as they stepped forward to transform the world starting with their own selves. The 6<sup>th</sup> annual Walk for Values was once again making history, as a proactive step towards a new global order where the participants brought to life the words of poet **Kahlil Gibran**, ***"I love you, my brothers and sisters, whoever you are. You and I are all children of one faith, for the diverse paths of religion are fingers of the loving hand of one Supreme Being...You are my brothers and sisters because you are human, and we all are sons and daughters of one Holy Spirit; We are equal and made of the same earth...I love you for your Truth ...Your Truth shall meet my Truth and blend together like the fragrance of flowers and become one whole and eternal Truth ... living in the eternity of Love and Beauty."***

Thousands of Canadians, including children and young adults who cherish universal human values, pounded the pavement to reiterate their commitment to self-transformation, while serenading fellow Torontonians with value songs and seeking their active cooperation in their little efforts to make a big difference for the sake of our collective futures. They called upon everyone to step forward with them to infuse our communities with peace, honesty, integrity, and acceptance while eradicating violence, guns, crime and drugs from our society. Its relevance was not lost on first time participant Mahtab

Roshanmehr, professional engineer, who first heard about the Walk for Values from a co-worker at a leading Toronto engineering company where she works. The idea struck an instant chord with her and her participation left her pleased with her decision to join. *“As a first time participant in the Walk for Values, I must say that I was very impressed with the idea of having such a walk in the first place. In today's world where everybody is so busy catching up with this fast-paced environment, it is so important and critical to stop for a short while and look inside of you, and around you, and notice how far or how close you are to the values. And I believe events like this would give you the opportunity to do that. I would like to thank the organizers and all the people who made this happen and hope that it continues,”* she says.

It's the vision behind the purpose of the Walk that draws so many to it. For Grade 5 student of the Sathya Sai School of Canada, Phillip Hannides, the Walk for Values is a cool event he loves participating in *“because instead of just sitting at home and doing nothing, and not thinking of values, it is so much better for everyone to come together and get inspired by the values, and motivate ourselves and others to practice them.”* His brother Nikita Hannides is a school alumnus who has regularly returned to participate in various community outreach and service projects of his alma mater because of the *“love energy that I feel when everyone gathers to try and practice human values of love and forgiveness. It is such a positive feeling to be involved in something motivating.”*

For Grade 3 student Sindujeyan Jeyapalan, the event offers hope of a brighter future *“because soon the world will be a better place where everyone is improving their behaviour each year, at the Walk for Values.”*

### **Love was in the Air and on Airwaves**

As the students celebrated optimism, hope, commitment, honesty, and social responsibility, the air was charged with unmistakable love energy, and their joy was so contagious that even on-lookers were eager to catch the buzz and take a plunge into the vortex of virtues.

Two of Toronto's most popular radio stations were broadcasting live from the scene of action, promoting the values and the altruistic vision of the walk during their broadcasts throughout the duration of the event.

The sixth annual Walk for Values was once again supported overwhelmingly by the thousands of friends, media outlets and scores of community partners of the Sathya Sai School of Canada. Opening and closing ceremony resonated endorsements from representatives of the various levels of government, the law enforcement agencies and the vibrant multicultural population of Toronto, who came out to throw their weight behind the event's humanistic focus.



## Universal Appeal of Human Values

Inaugurating the historic march was the Central Coordinator of the Sri Sathya Baba Organization of Canada and the CEO of the Sathya Sai School of Canada, Dr. V.P. Singh, who reminded everyone of the simplicity of Sri Sathya Sai Baba's message to Love All, Serve All and to Help Ever and Hurt Never. School Principal Dr. Revathi congratulated the participants on their presence at the event and welcomed them all. Standing alongside, once again, was the school's committed friend and city councilor Honourable Raymond Cho, who has always recognized the need for practicing universal values in all walks of life including governance, education, public policy, and municipal services. He delivered a congratulatory message from the Mayor of Toronto, Honourable David Miller, in which Mayor Miller expressed his pleasure that such an event takes place in that city every year.

With four huge floats and thousands marching alongside, Torontonians proudly walked the 2.5 kilometer distance through the heart of Toronto's prestigious downtown hub to remind themselves, their fellow Canadians, and tourists to the area, of the need to practice universal human values that have no borders. While the students and bands belted value songs from atop the floats, marchers carried colourful placards with quotes on values from world thinkers, and the energetic value girls added to the joy and excitement of the moment with their inspiring value cheers.

Closing ceremonies were also marked by a strong vote of confidence in the uniqueness of the vision that the walk expounds. These included a message from the Prime Minister of Canada Honourable Stephen Harper as well as Representatives of the Government of Ontario including the province's Minister of Health and Long Term Care, Honourable George Smitherman, Liberal MPP for the downtown riding of Toronto Centre-Rosedale and MPP Honourable Bas Balkissoon, Chair, Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly Member, Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills. Mr. Balkissoon, who has been an avid supporter of the Sathya Sai School of Canada and its brainchild the Walk for Values from the beginning, had earlier made a statement in the Ontario Legislature supporting it.

**In their speeches, both Members of the Ontario Legislative Assembly endorsed the need to practice universal human values to improve the quality of our lives at individual, community, national and global levels. Reiterating the same sentiment was Inspector Mario Di Tommaso of the 52 Division of the Toronto Police Service, who spoke of how the values that this walk emphasizes echo the efforts of the law enforcement agencies to keep our streets and homes crime, gun and drug free.**

While Toronto's prominent radio stations Flow 93.5 and EZ Rock 97.3 had their two SUVs on site, promoting the walk throughout the course of their broadcast, another popular station CFRM 1010

<http://www.cfrb.com/media/723316/Walk+for+Values+Report> carried the news of the promotional event the students held ahead of the big day. Several prominent community partners including the YEAH (Youth Energized and Harmonized) from Brampton also supported the event where all participants received a healthy, vegetarian meal package upon arrival as well as a copy of the souvenir magazine "Value Today". A multi-cultural program by community groups and performances by the Sathya Sai School choir and speeches by the students were some of the other highlights of the program.

### **Volunteer Driven Perfection Hard to Miss**

The ever disciplined and dedicated members of the Sri Sathya Sai Baba Organization of Canada from across the Greater Toronto Area poured in their love and energy to think through the last detail of the event, making it the most memorable Walk for Values ever. Exemplifying the dedication, discipline, and devotion of their role model and universal teacher Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the volunteers of the Walk for Values 2008 teams redefined the spirit of selfless service with their united effort, sincerity, and extreme hard work. Sai youth wearing their marshaling vests and safety helmets glided along the route on their roller blades, ensuring the smooth flow of the walk, relaying messages on their walkie-talkies and cell phones, and providing loving assistance where needed. The result was a love energy that was real, palpable and all pervasive.

### **National and International Popularity**

Proving the appeal of universal values beyond national borders, Chicago resident Salokya Tummala flew in from the USA to check it out for herself, having heard so much about the event. Describing how it felt to participate in this moving, pulsating and loving exhibition of Sri Sathya Sai Baba's teachings, she says, *"I felt blessed to be part of the event. I was very happy to see that Sri Sathya Sai Baba's message is reaching so many people. I was so excited to see such a large number of participants in Toronto downtown, full swing in action. That big banner 'Love All Serve All' caught my eye and I prayed immediately that I may practice this teaching more and more.*

*"Now I can imagine how much effort went in planning, coordinating and conducting the whole event. I felt really inspired not only to practice what I pledged but also to start the Walk for Values in the Chicago area."*

### **Start Small, Grow Big: Sri Sathya Sai Baba**

The resounding success of the Walk for Values 2008 in its flagship venue, the city of its birth, Toronto, on May 25 was further proof that in coming years, what began in 2003 as a little walk with barely 3000 participants, is all set to grow into an international phenomena, proving the universality of Sri Sathya Sai Baba's philosophy and its power to transcend all barriers of national borders, race, religion, culture, language, or region.

With each passing year, individuals, groups, businesses, representatives of the various levels of governments and community partners are eager to participate in and promote this unique community initiative of the Sathya Sai School of Canada, recognizing the relevance of human values in all walks of life and the need to include them in all areas of decision making.

At this community outreach event, thousands of motivated human beings remind themselves and others to foster a kinder, gentler world based on the Brotherhood of Man and Fatherhood of God. For many, the occasion makes for a modest yet inspiring attempt to depict the selfless life of perennial caring, giving, helping and loving that is personified by Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the universal teacher, whose philosophy focuses on the underlying oneness that binds all diversity.

Every year, thousands who have benefitted by the practice of Sri Sathya Sai Baba's example and teachings, express their gratitude by taking the message further into the most happening part of the city of Toronto, home to decision makers in the government, the financial district and the business hub, inviting everyone, including the tourists frequenting the area, to join them in improving the quality of their lives, and that of their families, communities and the planet, one step at a time. By wearing their heart on their sleeve, participants make bold and display the human value or its sub-value they wish to practice with greater intensity.

This live exhibition of the gospel of Truth, Peace, Love, Right Conduct and Nonviolence of Sri Sathya Sai Baba is not limited to Toronto alone. Canadians in nine cities celebrate the glory of the most exemplary presence on the face of earth by holding the Walk for Values locally. This year, following Toronto's lead were Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Regina, Winnipeg, Kingston and Ottawa.

To behold this experiential and public commitment to human values by its participants is a lively and moving sight, offering glimpses of the radiance of Sri Sathya Sai Baba and the life-transforming impact He has borne upon millions across the globe, including grateful Canadians.

At this exposition of universal human values, the displays are not limited to attractive billboards or models and pictures. Real people driven to a higher life purpose, ranging from tiny tots to the elderly and everyone else in between take on personal responsibility, and assume the role of live exhibits who deliver Sri Sathya Sai Baba's simple message for our collective good...a heart-warming global warming phenomenon that is being welcomed everywhere by seekers to quench their spiritual thirst.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE WALK FOR VALUES FOLLOWS:

---

### **Brief Synopsis of the Vision behind the Walk for Values**

The Walk for Values is a non-monetary walk designed to promote individual responsibility towards the collective future of humanity, one step at a time. This unique initiative is part of a global drive to seed the consciousness with global affirmations such as love, hope, optimism, consideration, kindness, patience, honesty, integrity, forgiveness, acceptance, charity, volunteerism.... It calls for an honest self-appraisal from its participants who then identify one area of personal growth that needs to be strengthened and then pledge the needed self-improvement.

---

### **History of the Walk for Values**

In September 2000, with the founding of the Sathya Sai School of Canada, for the very first time North American parents experienced the life-transforming impact of the holistic system of learning based on character education. The integration of the universal human values of Truth, Right Conduct, Love, Peace and Non-violence into the Ontario academic curriculum yielded results that extended beyond the students' personal growth, to their families, impacting the home environment positively. The grateful parents wanted to share their joy by taking the same message further into the wider community. Thus in 2003, the idea of the unique community outreach project the Walk for Values was born and right from the outset, it struck an instant chord with caring Canadians, growing into a national and now an international event.

---

### **Uniqueness of the Walk - Pledges sought in Love**

The uniqueness of the event is that it is neither a fundraiser nor a solicitation for monetary pledges. Rather, it promotes inner growth as an investment in personal and global awakening... a deposit in the future of all life forms on this planet including humanity. Participants in Canada, Australia and USA have been marching forward to fight social evils with weapons of mass appeal – universal human values.

---

### **Participation: Open to All, Only Non-Monetary Pledges Accepted**

The Walk is open to everyone: youth, children, adults, and groups representing schools, businesses, communities or faith groups. The walk involves diverse community groups who join hands to make the world a better place by carrying banners with quotes about values, ethics, morality and service; and through value songs, music, marching bands and colourful floats.

No monetary pledges are sought as the walk aims to raise level of human consciousness, not funds.

---

### **International Fame**

Since 2007, the Walk for Values has acquired international fame with conscientious Australians replicating Toronto's brainchild nationally in six major cities down under – Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney. In addition, select jurisdictions in the United States of America started their own walks on the same theme of global transformation through self-improvement.

<http://www.sathyasai.org/news/2008/walks.html>

[www.walkforvalues.com](http://www.walkforvalues.com)

## **GET INSPIRED**

### **THE "I CAN'T" FUNERAL**

Donna's fourth grade classroom looked no different from the many others that I had seen in the past. Students sat in five rows of six desks each. The teacher's desk was in front and faced the students. The bulletin board featured the students' work. In most respects it appeared to be a traditional elementary classroom. Yet something seemed different that day when I entered the classroom for the first time. There seemed to be an undercurrent of excitement.

Donna was a veteran small-town Michigan schoolteacher only two years away from retirement. In addition she was a volunteer participant in a countrywide staff development project that I had organized and facilitated. The training focused on language arts ideas that would empower students to feel good about themselves and help them take charge of their lives. Donna's job was to attend training sessions and implement the concepts being presented. And my job was to make such classroom visitations and encourage implementation.

I took an empty seat in the back of the room and watched. All the students were working on a task, filling a sheet of notebook paper with thoughts and ideas. The ten-year-old student next to me was filling her page with "I Can'ts".

"I can't kick the soccer ball past second base." "I can't do long division with more than three numerals." "I can't get Debbie to like me." Her page was half full and she showed no signs of letting up. She worked on with determination and persistence.

I walked down the row glancing in student's papers. Everyone was writing sentences, describing things they couldn't do. "I can't do ten push-ups." "I can't hit one over the left hand fence." "I can't eat only one cookie."

By this time the activity engaged my curiosity, so I decided to check with the teacher to see what was going on. As I approached her, I noticed that she too was busy writing. I felt it best not to interrupt. "I can't get John's mother to come for a teacher conference." "I can't get my daughter to put gas in the car." "I can't get Alan to use words instead of fists."

Thwarted in my efforts to determine why the students and their teacher were dwelling on the negative instead of writing the more positive "I Can" statements, I returned to my seat and continued my observations. Students wrote for another ten minutes. Most filled their page. Some started another. "Finish the one you're on and don't start a new one," were the instructions Donna used to signal the end of the activity. Students were then instructed to fold the papers in half and bring them to the front. When the students reached their teacher's desk, they placed their "I Can't" statements into an empty shoe box.

When all of the students' papers were collected, Donna added hers. She put the lid on the box, tucked it under her arm and headed out the door and down the hall. All the students followed the teacher and I followed the students. Halfway down the hallway the procession stopped. Donna entered the custodian's room rummaged around and came out with a shovel. Shovel in one hand, shoe box in the other, Donna marched the students out to the school to the farthest corner of the playground. There they began to dig.

They were going to bury their "I Can'ts"! The digging took over ten minutes because most of the fourth graders wanted a turn. When the hole approached three feet deep, the digging ended. The box of "I Can'ts" was placed in a position at the bottom of the hole and then quickly covered with dirt.

Thirty-one 10 and 11-year-olds stood around the freshly dug grave site. Each had at least one page full of "I Can'ts" in the shoe box, four feet under. So did their teacher.

At this point Donna announced, "Boys and girls, please join hands and bow your heads." The students complied. They quickly formed a circle around the grave, creating a bond with their hands. They lowered their heads and waited. Donna delivered the eulogy.

"Friends, we gather here today to honor the memory of 'I Can't.' While he was with us here on earth, he touched the lives of everyone, some more than others. His name unfortunately, has been spoken in every public building - school, city halls, state capitols, and yes, even The White House.

"We have provided 'I Can't' with a final resting place and a headstone that contained his epitaph. His is survived by his brothers and sisters, 'I Can,' 'I Will' and 'I'm Going to Right Away.' They are not as well known as their famous relative and are certainly not as strong and powerful yet. Perhaps some day, with your help, they will make an even bigger mark on the world. "

"May 'I Can't' rest in peace and may everyone present pick up their lives and move forward in his absence. Amen."

As I listened to the eulogy I realized that these students would never forget this day. The activity was symbolic, a metaphor for life. It was a right brain experience that would stick in the subconscious and conscious mind forever.

Writing "I Can'ts", burying them and hearing the eulogy — showed a major educational effort on this part of this teacher. And she wasn't done yet. At the conclusion of the eulogy she turned the students around, marched them back into the classroom and held a wake.

They celebrated the passing of "I Can't" with cookies, popcorn and fruit juices. As part of the celebration, Donna cut a large tombstone from butcher paper. She wrote the words "I Can't" at the top and put RIP in the middle. The date was added at the bottom.

The paper tombstone hung in Donna's classroom for the remainder of the year. On those rare occasions when a student forgot and said, "I Can't", Donna simply pointed to the RIP sign. The student then remembered that "I Can't" was dead and chose to rephrase the statement.

I wasn't one of Donna's students. She was one of mine. Yet that day I learned an enduring lesson from her.

Now, years later, whenever I hear the phrase, "I Can't," I see images of that fourth grade funeral. Like the students, I remember that "I Can't" is dead.

*~by Phillip B. Childs*



## TOO NICE TO SHARE

A young lady, Carie, was waiting for her flight in the boarding hall of a large international airport. She was feeling tired and a little lonely.

As she would need to wait for a few hours, she decided to buy a book to wile away the time. She also bought a packet of the best cookies she could find.

She sat down in an armchair in the VIP room of the airport, to rest and read in comfort.

Beside the armchair where the packet of cookies lay, was another seat and a man soon settled down there. The next minute, he opened his magazine and began to read.

When Carie took out the first cookie, the man took one too. She looked at him with irritation, but he did not seem to realise how she felt; he appeared engrossed in his business magazine. She thought: "What a nerve! If I was in the mood I would have said something to him!"

After a while, Carie picked another cookie and the man did the same again! For each cookie she ate, the man took one too. It was too annoying for her. She just wanted to get up and give the man a good piece of her mind but could not do it; she had never been able to speak up for herself, always preferring to avoid conflicts.

When only one cookie remained, she thought: "What will this awful man do now?" Then the man, taking the last cookie, divided it in half and offered her the other half!

Ah! That was too much! She was in a rage now! In a huff, she took her book and bags and stormed to the boarding gate. Giving one glance behind her, she saw the man looking at her with a puzzled look on his face. "Well, some people live on a different planet," she reflected.

She settled down on her seat in the plane with a quieter mind; quite relieved to be away from that ill-mannered human being. She now wanted to read the good book that she had carried and could not do so all along. She looked through her purse to find her glasses, and to her consternation saw her packet of cookies - untouched and unopened!

"Oh my God!" she exclaimed and felt so ashamed. She had actually forgotten to take her cookies out of her purse.

The man had shared his cookies with her, without the least hesitation...while she had been upset, grumbling within and cursing him. And now there was no chance to explain herself... or to apologize.

Carie had learnt her lesson too late; she had now not only the full pack of cookies but also plenty of food for thought.

If we examine closely, there are always many such dramas playing out daily in our lives. We only have to be alert and aware, and not forget our heart as we think with our minds. Can we be like the man in the story and live beyond the small world of 'me' and 'mine'?

Swami says:

"It is unfortunate that people even harm those who help them.... We should help even those who harm us."

Let us never lose an opportunity to lighten other lives because that is the only way we can make our life bright.

## THE OVERLOOKED TRUTH ABOUT OURSELVES

A voyaging ship was wrecked during a storm at sea and only two of the men on it were able to swim to a small, desert like island.

The two survivors, not knowing what else to do, agreed that they had no other recourse but to pray to God. However, to find out whose prayer was more powerful, they agreed to divide the territory between them and stay on opposite sides of the island.

The first thing they prayed for was food. The next morning, the first man saw a fruit-bearing tree on his side of the land, and he was able to eat its fruit. The other man's parcel of land however remained barren.

After a week, the first man was lonely and he decided to pray for a wife. The next day, another ship was wrecked, and the only survivor was a woman who swam to his side of the land. Soon they agreed to marry. But on the other side of the island, there was still nothing.

After his new-found status as a husband, the first man now started praying for a house, clothes and of course more food. And the very next day, like magic, all of these were given to him! But all along, the second man had yet not received anything.

Finally, the first man prayed to God for a ship, so that he and his wife could leave the island. The next morning, the man and his wife found a ship docked at their side of the island. The first man boarded the ship with his wife and decided to maroon the second man on that island.

The first man considered the other man unworthy to receive God's blessings, since none of his prayers had been answered. But just when the ship was about to leave, the first man heard a voice from heaven. The voice asked him, "Why are you leaving your companion on the island?"

"My blessings are mine alone, since I was the one who prayed for them," the first man answered. "His prayers were all unanswered and so he does not deserve to leave the island!"

"You are mistaken!" the voice rebuked him. "He had only one prayer, which I answered. And if not for that, you would not have received any of My blessings." Puzzled with that reply, the first man asked the voice, "Tell me, why you say so? What did he pray for that I should owe him anything?"

The voice replied, "He prayed that all your prayers be answered."

A simple story, but a profound meaning. For all we know, most of our blessings may not be the fruits of our prayers alone, but those of another praying for us.

We might pride ourselves for what we are, often referring to oneself as a 'self-made' person. But such thoughts only go to prove how little we are aware of

the fact that behind our success there are contributions of many people. Right from our peers and friends, to our near and dear ones who do their bit silently out of love for us; our success certainly is not a fruit of our efforts alone. We are what we are because we are part of a family, a member of a society. And greatness lies in not only acknowledging this but also being grateful for this.

The least that we can do is offer our sincere gratitude to the society at large. Even praying for others welfare is certainly a token of gratitude to society. For, as Alfred Lord Tennyson has remarked: "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." We cannot know for sure how God answers our prayers, but our part is to pray, sincerely and selflessly. And then, the magic will inevitably happen. It is for this reason that every session in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba ends with the dictum *Loka Samasta Sukino Bavantu* – 'May all beings everywhere be happy'.

## **TEST YOUR SPIRITUAL QUOTIENT**

### **MULTI-FAITH QUIZ**

#### **On Founders of World Religions**

*Extolling the Gurus/Founders of other religions, Swami says: "God sends sages, saints and prophets to unveil the Truth, and Himself appears as an Avathaar (Divine incarnation) to awaken and liberate man. The founders of religions experienced these truths and propagated them as ideals for mankind. They were all enlightened souls filled with love and wisdom. Their goal and purpose was the same; none had the design to divide, disturb, or destroy. They attempted to do good, see good, be good and teach good."*

*"People professing different faiths worship God under different names: Vishnu, Buddha, Nanak, Allah, Christ, and others. The Truth is that there is only one God. People today try to find God in religions. But God is to be found not in mathamu (religions) but in the mathi (mind). It is only when the mind is controlled and purified that God will be recognized. The whole Universe is the mansion of the Lord. Once you recognize this Truth, how can any differences arise? All the diverse communities in the nation should be united. Mankind should become one family. The world will then become a paradise."*

*In this sacred month of Guru Poornima, let us explore the messages that each Guru/Prophet propagated while always being aware that all religions should be revered equally, because God is one and the same for all.*

1. Extolling Hinduism, Swami has revealed to us: "The word "Hindu" is composed of the two syllables "Him," meaning *Himsa* (violence) and "Du" meaning, "distant." Hinduism is the faith that makes "violence distant". It is the most ancient in origin. Having regard to its *Vedic* basis, it has been described as Hinduism. The essence of this faith is its universality as expressed in the saying: "*Lokaas samasthaas sukhino bhavanthu*" (May all the peoples everywhere be happy).

The basis of Hinduism is the belief in the unity of everything. The basic Hindu faith is not for Indians alone but is for all mankind; hence it is called *Sanaathana Dharma*. *Sanaathana* means "Eternal". Only a *Dharma* (code of righteousness) which can win Universal acceptance can be named *Sanaathana*. All the religions that we know of are derived from a person or prophet who is adored as the ideal. Islam has Muhammad, Christianity has Jesus, Buddhism has the Buddha, etc..."

According to Swami, then, from which Guru/Prophet is *Sanaathana Dharma* derived?

- A. It is not derived from or through a person.
- B. It is a combination of the contribution of many saints.
- C. Shankaracharya.

D. Certain Aryan prophets.

2. We all know that Islam was founded by Prophet Muhammad. In Swami's Divine 1983 Discourse, He said, "All founders of religions have heard this impersonal Voice of God revealing the *Aathma* that activates the entire Creation. Just as the *Vedas* (revealed sacred scriptures) were 'heard' and propagated as 'heard' (*Shruthi*), the Quran too was 'heard' by Hazrath Muhammad.

Hazrath Muhammad announced the message of God that he had heard to the townsmen of Mecca. At that time, people did not give heed to the Divine Declarations. They forced him to leave the place. But, Hazrath Muhammad knew that Truth will win and God will prevail. He knew that the insult and injury were only for the body; the *Aathma* can never be hurt."

According to Swami, "Islam is a word which denotes not a particular religion but a state of mind, the state of \_\_\_\_\_."

- A. Total Devotion to God.
- B. Total Compassion for All.
- C. Total Surrender to God.
- D. Total Love for All.

3. Buddhism developed out of the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama who reached enlightenment and assumed the title Buddha which means 'The Enlightened One'. In His Divine 1998 Discourse, Swami tells us about Buddha: "Buddha approached many Gurus and listened to their teachings. He studied sacred texts. He realized that this was only a wasteful exercise. He also found that there are people who devote their entire time to reading all kinds of books, without trying to put into practice what they learn from such reading. What is the use of such reading? Buddha spoke out against scholarship unrelated to the good life. He carried out a great deal of study and met many great men. He listened to many discourses. He realized that true knowledge could not be got by these means."

According to Swami, in order to attain *nirvana*, what conclusion did Buddha come to?

- A. By severing all relationship attachments.
- B. By dedicating life to the service of mankind.
- C. Through proper use of the senses.
- D. By helping the spread of Buddhism.

4. In His Divine 1976 Discourse, Swami tells us: "Jainism, the religion that was rendered an all-India movement by Mahaaveera, extols *jina* (the heroic conqueror of the senses), the emotions and the stratagems of the intellect. He called upon all to carry out the duties commensurate to their status and professions, with steady faith and enthusiasm. He declared that all things and beings are holy in their own right, and are but pilgrims on the road to Realization. Any injury inflicted on any of them is an intervention in that sacred journey and so has to be scrupulously avoided."

One of the five *manthras* that the Jains adore is: 'Namo arihanthaanaam' which means – 'Salutations to the great heroes (Mahavira) who have conquered desire'. According to Swami, what does the adoration through *manthras* do for Jains?

- A. Brings a sincere seeker closer to God.
- B. Helps remove the evil effects of all sinful acts.
- C. Promotes Unity.
- D. Infuses a charitable disposition.

5. Zoroastrianism was founded by Zarathushtra (Zoroaster) who taught his followers that there was only one single Supreme God, Ahura Mazda – God of Wisdom, whose symbol is Fire. In His 1976 Divine Discourse, Swami talks about this noble founder: "Zoroastrianism, the Paarsi religion, was founded by Zoroaster, who wanted that man should ever have the Fire of Wisdom blazing in his consciousness..."

According to Swami, what is the significance of this Fire worship?

- A. To keep the flame of God Consciousness glowing.
- B. So that evil thoughts and tendencies might be reduced to ashes.
- C. To burn desires.
- D. To promote warmth and love amongst all.

6. Extolling Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity, Swami says: "Christ's basic teachings were related to promotion of compassion, sympathy, love, sacrifice and fellowship among human beings. Jesus was named the Christ as he was regarded as the "chosen" messenger of God. Christianity proclaimed that all are children of God and should have fraternal feelings towards each other. Jesus declared: 'All are one, be alike to everyone.'"

In His Divine 1992 Discourse, Swami reminds us: "Jesus performed many miraculous deeds, relieved the sufferings of many in distress, preached sublime truths to the people, and ultimately sacrificed his life. For over a hundred years after His martyrdom, Christ's message did not have any impact. Four centuries later, Christianity was accepted by Roman emperors. Jesus Christ worked for the prosperity of the entire mankind and gave

happiness to the people. He sacrificed His very life and that is the reason why the name of Jesus Christ has remained permanently."

According to Swami, the significance behind the Christians making the cross sign is unity of head, heart and \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. Mind
- B. Soul
- C. Speech
- D. Hand

7. The Sikh faith was founded by Shri Guru Nanak After his death; a series of nine Gurus led the movement until these functions passed to the holy text. This text, the *Shri Guru Granth Sahib*, was compiled by the tenth Guru, Gobind Singh. It consists of hymns and writings of the first 10 Gurus, along with texts from different Muslim and Hindu saints. The holy text is considered the 11th and final Guru.

Enlightening us more on Sikhism, Swami says: "The Preceptor (Guru) who reveals the *Atma* and makes one conscious of its existence as one's reality has the highest place in this system of worship. The collection of the teachings of the Gurus - referred to as *Granth Sahib* - is extolled and revered by the Sikhs."

According to Swami, to make everyone experience their Divinity within, what was the noblest path that Guru Nanak started?

- A. Community Singing.
- B. Community Feeding.
- C. Community Reading of the Holy Book.
- D. Community Service Projects.

8. The Bahá'í Faith is based on the teachings of Baha'u'llah. Members of the Bahá'í faith the world over mark July 9 as a holy day. On this day Bahá'ís remember the death of one of the founding figures of their faith - Mírzá Alí Muhammad, who assumed the title of the 'Bab' that means "Gate" or "Door" in Arabic. However, his teachings did not die, and they laid the basis for the present-day worldwide Bahá'í faith.

What was the Mission of the Bab?

- A. To inscribe Commandments for future followers
- B. To be an exemplar of service to the downtrodden
- C. To found a new religion
- D. To herald the arrival of his successor.



9. Sharing His revelations on Judaism to us, Swami has mentioned in His Divine 1991 Discourse: "Two thousand years ago, in Palestine, a province of the Roman Empire, there were Jews professing Judaism. The Jews believed in one God called Yehovah. They believed that God would send a Messiah for the people of Israel. Jerusalem was the sacred city of the Jews and continued to be so even under the Romans."

While Jews see Abraham as a symbol of trusting and obeying God, Moses is also an important figure, as the leader who freed them from slavery in Egypt and most importantly, revealed the Torah – The Jewish Bible.

Extolling Prophet Moses, Swami says: "In the Bible, God is described as Omnipotent and All-Encompassing. Moses was always meditating on God and dedicated his entire life to God. Because of this, Moses acquired

- 
- A. The rulership of Israel.
  - B. Knowledge of his past lives.
  - C. The Effulgence of the Divine
  - D. 1008 Horses and Elephants.

10. In His Divine 1976 Discourse, Swami proclaims: "The Sai religion, if the name of religion in its literal sense of binding man to God is accepted, is the essence of all faiths and religions. Above all, recognize this truth: Sai is in all. When you hate another, you are hating Sai; when you hate Sai, you are hating yourself. When you inflict pain on another name, remember that the other is yourself, in another form, with another name.

Sai wants that the votaries of each religion must cultivate faith in its own excellence and realize their validity by their own intense practice. That is the Sai religion, **the religion that feeds and fosters all religions and emphasizes their common Greatness.**

Take up this religion, boldly and joyfully. For, this Sai has come in order to achieve the supreme task of uniting the entire mankind, as one family through the bond of brotherhood, of affirming and illumining the *Aathmic* Reality of each being in order to reveal the Divine which is the basis on which the entire Cosmos rests, and of instructing all to recognize the common Divine Heritage that binds man to man, so that man can rid himself of the animal, and rise into the Divine which is his goal.

My task is to grant solace, courage, and Peace (Shanthi). That is to say, My characteristics are the ancient, authentic ones. Only the manifested form is

new. The life of Sai, the Message of Sai, the ideals Sai holds forth, the lesson that Sai teaches the world, is all enshrined in one word \_\_\_\_\_."

- A. Service
- B. Surrender
- C. Unity
- D. Love

### **ANSWERS:**

1A. Sanaathana Dharma is not derived from or through a person.

Swami clarifies: "But Sanaathana Dharma is not derived from or through a person. It is the primal essence of all faiths. It is the essence of all the messages the prophets proclaimed. It is welcomed by all mankind, for it welcomes all mankind. The essence of all religions, the goal of all paths, the destination of all spiritual effort, is this Sanaathana Dharma (the Universal Eternal Faith). It is like the ocean: particular creeds are rivers that flow into it. It is the vital air on which humanity has to live. It strives for the well-being of all peoples, in all countries, at all times. Hence, the appellation; Sanathana - meaning ancient or timeless.

No one knows when it was revealed and who its founder was. Other religions have their chronology. The Hindu religion knows no growth or decline. It belongs to all countries. It is acceptable to all people. Sanaathana Dharma is the very basis of living. It deals with the total personality. It embraces all faiths and has established worldwide influence.

The Upanishads declared: "Sahasraakshas-sahasrapaad" (The Divine has myriad eyes and myriad feet). All eyes are God's; all feet are His; all hands are His. This was the message of the Upanishads. In this manner, the Upanishads emphasized the oneness of humanity. For man, it is the collective concept that is fundamental and not individualism. No one can live in this world all by himself. He has to cultivate the sense of community if he wishes to live in peace and happiness. "Sahanaa vavathu; sahanau bhunakthu; sahaviryam karavaavahai" (Let us live together; let us struggle together; let us grow together in joy and harmony). This was the teaching of the Vedas which is based on the view that there is nothing in the world which is not permeated by the Divine. From a stone to a diamond, from a blade of grass to a blooming lotus, from an ant to an elephant, everything was regarded as a manifestation of the Divine...love should not be confined to human beings, but should be extended to all beings and objects in creation."

2C. Total Surrender to God.

Swami enlightens us further: **“Islam is a word which denotes not a particular religion but a state of mind, the state of total surrender to the Will of God.** Islam means dedication, surrender, peace, tranquility. Islam denotes the social community whose members have achieved supreme peace through surrender to the All-Merciful, All-Powerful God and who have vowed to live in peace with their fellowmen. Islam taught something higher. It directed attention to the One in the Many, the Unity in Diversity and led people to the Reality named God.

The Quran has *Salat and Zakat* as the two eyes. *Salat* means prayer; *Zakat* means charity. Those who consider charity as a high duty and elevate their consciousness through prayers and continuous meditation on God are Muslims. Islam teaches that God's Grace can be won through justice and righteous living; and that wealth, scholarship and power cannot earn it. Holy Love alone can please the Lord. This is the message of every religion.”

3C. Through proper use of the senses.

In His Divine 2001 Discourse, Swami reveals to us: “Buddha realized that names, forms and physical relationships are transient. He said one should not get deluded by them. *Yad Drishyam Thannasyam* (all that is seen is bound to perish). He studied various sacred texts and had an audience with many scholars but he was not satisfied. Ultimately, he came to the conclusion that one could attain Nirvana only through proper use of the five senses. No spiritual practice can yield the desired result if the senses are misused. Have sacred vision. Speak good words. Hear only what is good. Entertain noble thoughts. There is no greater spiritual practice than this. This was the teaching of Buddha.”

Answer: B. Helps remove the evil effects of all sinful acts.

In the Sathya Sai Vahini, Swami shares: “The Jains have as their *manthra*:

Namo arihanthaanaam  
Namo Siddhanaam  
Namo ayiriyaanaam  
Namo uvajjhayaanaam  
Namo Loye sabba saahoonam,

meaning:

Salutations to the great heroes (Mahavira) who have conquered desire.  
Salutations to the Siddhas (those equipped with super natural powers).  
Salutations to the great Masters of Spiritual Wisdom.  
Salutations to the great Teachers who transmit the wisdom.  
Salutations to the good persons of all lands.

**This fivefold adoration helps remove the evil effects of all sinful acts.** Experiencing the meaning of this *mantra* gives one the sum of prosperity. The

Jains declare that when one merges in this universal adoration, one is liberated and attains *Moksha*."

5B. So that evil thoughts and tendencies might be reduced to ashes.

Swami continues: "...so that evil thoughts and tendencies might be reduced to ashes. It has to infuse all thoughts, words and deeds with the illumination of virtue and vigour; it must destroy all worldly desire and render man pure for entry into the heaven of freedom. Adoration, meditation and acts of selfless service are essential for the dawn of enlightenment."

The Zoroastrian enters the fire temple after a short ritual and offers sandalwood for the sacred fire in the sanctum sanctorum, accessible only to the officiating priest. The Fire Temples are of three categories: Atash Behram, Atash Aderan and Atash Dadgah. The consecration ceremony of the fire of the highest category of fire temples, Atash Behram, is a most elaborate one.

6D. Hand.

Swami says: "Unity of head, heart, and hand is essential for man. This is the true significance behind the Christians making the cross sign. There are many who are deeply devoted to Jesus. Their duty is to glorify the great message of Jesus. The most important message of Jesus is the establishment of "Peace on Earth and goodwill among men." Without peace, mankind cannot achieve progress in any sphere - material, spiritual or moral. Christ preached only this truth and taught the people that the body should be used for service to society. This is the teaching of Vedanta. Vedanta declares that the body is intended only to do actions in the world in a selfless way."

7A. Community Singing.

Swami says: "Guru Nanak declared that only through good thoughts, good speech and good actions can one realize the Divine. Guru Nanak, the first Sikh *guru*, was the initiator of the practice of community singing of devotional songs. He believed that through such community singing the common man can ennoble his life and experience the presence of the Divine in everyone. This practice gathered momentum over the years. **It was to promote unity among people of different faiths that Guru Nanak favoured community prayers in preference to individual prayer in isolation.**

When all people join in unison to pray to God, their prayers will melt the heart of God. In a large gathering there must be at least one who prays with a pure heart. That prayer will reach God. Hence, devotees should take part in community bhajans. They should participate in community service and involve themselves in the life of the community. This is the noblest path."

In Sathya Sai Vahini, Swami further extols both these Gurus of Sikhism: "The Embodiment of Equanimity and Compassion, Nanak the Great, preached his highly wonderful message of Love. His all-embracing heart blossomed. Among those who shone as heroic supporters of the Hindu culture unto the last, the foremost was Guru Govind Singh. Undeterred by tortures that forced him to shed his own blood and the blood of his own beloved, deserted by those for whom he had undergone such torture, he did not utter a word of blame against his compatriots, but, entered the Deccan and gave up his life, as the King of Beasts does when his heart is hurt. May that great person's fame persist for ever on earth!"

8D. To herald the arrival of his successor.

The Bab declared that His mission was to herald the imminent arrival of the long-awaited Promised One; the Messenger of God Who would usher in the age of universal peace and transform the world - that Messenger was Baha'u'llah, which means 'the Glory of God'.

He clarified the central aim of His mission by explaining that "the purpose underlying this Revelation, as well as those that preceded it, has, in like manner, been to announce the advent of the Faith of Him Whom God will make manifest."

The central theme of His major work - the Bayan - was the imminent appearance of a second Messenger from God, one Who would be far greater than the Báb. The Báb stated that "no words of Mine can adequately describe Him, nor can any reference in My Book, the Bayan, do justice to His Cause."

Bahá'í religion may be unique in the way that it accepts all other faiths as true and valid. Bahá'ís accept the divine nature of the missions of Abraham, Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, Prophet Muhammad and other Prophets and Manifestations too because they believe each one was a further stage in the revelation of God.

9C. The Effulgence of the Divine.

In His Divine 1986 Discourse, Swami reveals: "Moses acquired the effulgence of the Divine. The face is a reflection of the inner being. Whatever thoughts and emotions fill a man; they are reflected, in his face. **Moses, who was ever dwelling on the glories of God, reflected in his face the radiance and splendour of the Divine.** This is revealed in the Bible."

Moses was the greatest prophet, leader and teacher that Judaism has ever known. God appeared to Moses and chose him to lead the people out of Egyptian slavery and to the Promised Land.

Orthodox Jews believe God taught the Oral Torah to Moses, and he taught it to others, that Moses introduced a covenant relationship between the Lord

and the children of Israel when he descended from Mt. Sinai with the Ten Commandments.

10D. Love.

Swami, so lovingly, reminds us: "You will learn then that I am Love (Prema); that I give only one thing, Bliss (Ananda) through Love. I am the Embodiment of Love; Love is My Instrument. There is no creature without Love; the lowest loves itself, at least. And its *self* is God.

If one takes all these religions, whether it is Hinduism, or the Parsi religion or Buddhism or Christian religion or Islam and, if one takes parts of them and experiences those parts, there is no doubt that he derives a certain amount of joy. But that does not mean that we have to give up any one of them or take any one only. You have to **recognize that in all of them there is a common factor that relates to the oneness of Divinity, the *Atma* and that recognition alone will be the complete realization and utilization of these different religions.** Our ability to comprehend and acquire complete knowledge is defective and has in many cases disappeared. That is the reason why when we look at a religion, we do not comprehend the whole of it, but we take a bit of it and form an opinion....

**There is only one religion and that is the religion of LOVE."**

## QUIZ ON DIVINE GURU PURNIMA DISCOURSES

*Swami says: "Guru Pournima is not performed by circumambulation and offerings to the Guru. What is the real offering? It is the offering of one's love. To know that God exists everywhere is circumambulation. If you understand these terms, every day is Guru Pournima. There is only one Guru, that is God and there is no other Guru. Contemplate on that Guru."*

*Below is a special quiz based on enlightening discourses delivered by Bhagavan Baba in the last six decades.*

1. In His 1956 Divine Guru Poornima Discourse, Swami simplifies the meaning of 'Guru': "The Guru is called so because the letter 'Gu' signifies *Gunaatheetha* - one who has transcended the three *gunas* (qualities) - the *Thaamasik*, the *Raajasik* and even the *Saathwik* (ignorant, passionate and virtuous); and the letter 'Ru' signifies one who is *Roopa Varjitha* (one who has grasped the formless aspect of God-head)...The 'Guru' destroys the illusion and sheds light; his presence is cool and comforting. That is why this day, a *Pournami* (Full Moon day), is allotted for paying due honour to the Guru. Moreover, the Moon is the presiding deity of the mind and *Pournami* is the day on which the mind has become fully beneficent. Of course, you must know what you have lost, so that you may start on the search to recover it!"

According to Swami, what have we lost that the Guru helps us find?

- A. Learning to control the mind.
- B. Our real name.
- C. Our relationship with God.
- D. The Divinity in all of His Creation.

2. In His 1985, Divine Guru Poornima Discourse, Swami enlightens us with a story on how earning the *Guru's* grace can redeem our life. "When you are given some work, you should put your heart and soul into it, and do the work with the utmost sincerity and dedication, to the limit of your capacity. Here is an example of this:

Sri Sankaracharya had a number of disciples, of whom 13 were considered important. Of these, four were the closest to the Master. They were Hasthimalika, Thotaka, Suresha and Padmapada. The first three chose to study the scriptures under their Guru, but the last one said that he would be most happy just serving the Guru. Sankara asked him what service he wanted to perform. The disciple replied that he wanted to wash the Guru's clothes and have them ready for the Guru each day. The other three would ridicule him for choosing only service to the Guru, while they were learning the great scriptures, but the fourth disciple was not at all bothered by that. Every day he used to take the Guru's clothes to the middle of the river so that they could be washed in the purest water available. One day there was a flood and he was

caught in the middle of the river. He was not worried about losing his life, but he was greatly concerned about getting the clothes to the *Guru*, in time. He began rushing across the river, which was now in spate."

What happened whenever Padmapada placed his foot in the river to cross over to get to his Guru?

- A. A stone lotus sprang up.
- B. An alligator popped up and helped him across.
- C. Bold fishermen kindly gave him a ride.
- D. The waters receded at each step until he reached ashore.

3. In His 1964 Divine Guru Poornima Discourse, Swami reassures us: "Once you have secured a *Guru*, leave everything to him, even the desire to achieve liberation. He knows you more than you yourself ever can. He will direct you as much as is good for you. Your duty is only to obey and to smother the tendency to drift away from Him. You may ask how are we to earn our food, if we attach ourselves to a *Guru* like this. Be convinced that the Lord will not let you starve; He will give you not merely money but even *Amirtha*, not only food, but the nectar of immortality. Become immersed in the sweetness of the Name on your tongue."

According to Swami what is more important than getting a Name for repetition from a Guru?

- A. Serving him daily.
- B. Assisting him in spreading his teachings.
- C. Learning a new dictum everyday.
- D. Observing his commands.

4. In His 1980 Divine Guru Poornima Discourse, Swami clarifies: "Some *Gurus* initiate the pupil into a *manthra* (mystic formula) and advise repetition of the same. But, they do not emphasize the innate Divine Reality of the pupil which they cannot ignore even for a moment, nor do they insist on the moral regeneration, so necessary for clarifying his inner faculties.

The *manthra*-granting *Guru* is the *Dheeksha Guru* (initiating preceptor); the personality recasting *Guru* is the *Shiksha Guru* (guiding preceptor). It is this latter *Guru* that is reverentially praised in thousands of ways in the holy texts. He removes the faults in vision and destroys the darkness of ignorance. He reveals the *Aathma* to the individual and makes him free. *Guru Poornima* is dedicated to such *Gurus*."

Then, according to Swami, who is the Guru of the Gurus?

- A. The *manthra* granting *Guru*.
- B. The God within.



- C. The Personality recasting Guru.
- D. The Wise preceptor.

5. In His Divine 1992 Guru Poornima Discourse, Swami poses the stark reality of the difference between a real Guru and a fake one: "Among mankind today there is great need for the *Guru*. Who is a true *Guru*? What is the truth underlying the *Guru* principle? Is he the one that teaches worldly education? Is the one who explores the properties of matter, a *Guru*? Is the one who describes in detail Natural Sciences, a *Guru*? No, they are only \_\_\_\_\_.

A true *Guru* is the embodiment of *Brahmaananda* (transcendental bliss). Who is this *Brahmaananda*? Where does he exist? When we enquire on these lines, we find that there is nothing comparable to it in the Universe. All the joys of the world are immanent in *Brahmaananda* (transcendental divine bliss)."

According to Swami, who are they then?

- A. Imposters
- B. Preceptors
- C. Teachers
- D. Spiritual guides

6. Expanding on that Supreme Bliss, in His 1985, Divine Guru Poornima Discourse, Swami reveals to us the secret behind achieving that state of Supreme Bliss which a true Guru attains: "The real Guru is ever in the consciousness of *Brahmaananda* (Supremest Ananda). Such a one is the Guru to be sought. The world, the cosmos, every particle, is *Ananda* itself but being ever in it, with it, of it and for it, man is unable to be It, on account of the darkness that misleads him and deludes him."

According to Swami, how can man attain that level of Supreme *Ananda*?

- A. By getting rid of obstacles that deny this experience.
- B. By meditating along with the Guru.
- C. By reading books written by the Guru.
- D. By singing God's Glories along with the Guru.

7. In His Divine, 1989 Guru Poornima Discourse, Swami reveals to us the origin of Guru Poornima celebrations: "Today is *Vyasapurnima* day. Vyasa was a great *rishi*. He is described as an incarnation of Lord Narayana. He set down in writing the *Vedas* which previously were known only in the form of sound. He was the great-grandson of Arundhati (the wife of Vasishta). He codified the *Vedas*. As he was born on the full moon day in the month of *Aashada*, this day is celebrated as *Vyasapurnima*. Vyasa glorified the Divinity that is equally present in all human beings and propagated this truth to the world.

After writing the 18 *puranas*, he summed up their message in one line."

According to Swami, what is that one line message that Sage Vyasa proclaimed?

- A. Love All, Serve All.
- B. Help Ever, Hurt Never.
- C. Love is God, God is Love; Live in Love.
- D. To Know God is to become God.

8. In His 1984 Divine Guru Poornima Discourse, Swami very beautifully illustrates the ideal Guru-disciple relationship: "Who is fit to be a *Guru* and who is fit to be a *shishya* (disciple)? If we examine the Geetha, we will know whether we are the ideal *shishyas* (disciples) or not.

In the Bhagavath Geetha, the *shishya* is *Narotthama* (the highest among men), the *Guru* is *Purushothama* (the Supreme Person); the *shishya* is a *Mahaathma* (high-souled), the *Guru* is *Paramaathma* (the Over-soul); the *shishya* is *Aadarsha-muurthi* (an ideal person), the *Guru* is an *Avathaara-muurthi* (incarnation of the Divine); the *shishya* is a *Paathradhaara* (an actor), the *Guru* is *Suuthradhaara* (the director of the play); the *shishya* is a *Dhanurdhara* (wielder of the bow), the *Guru* is *Yogeshwara* (the Lord of Yoga). It is this type of *Guru-Shishya* relationship which illustrates the ideal combination."

According to Swami, what is an essential quality in a Guru-disciple relationship?

- A. Both should be eager to teach/learn.
- B. Commitment of time between both.
- C. Freedom from attachment with each other.
- D. Freedom from envy.

9. In His 1986 Divine Guru Poornima Discourse, Swami teaches in depth on the eight different types of Gurus and their functions: "There are eight types of *Gurus*: *Bodha Guru*; *Veda Guru*; *Nishiddha Guru*; *Kaamyaa Guru*; *Vaachaka Guru*; *Soochaka Guru*; *Kaarana Guru*; and *Vihita Guru*.

1] *Bodha Guru* teaches the *Sastras* and encourages the pupil to act up to *sastraic* injunctions.

2] The *Veda Guru* imparts the inner meaning of the *Vedas*, establishes the pupil in spiritual truths and turns his mind towards God.

3] The *Nishiddha Guru* imparts knowledge about rites and duties and shows how one's welfare here and in the hereafter, can be ensured.

4] The *Kaamyaa Guru* makes one engage himself in meritorious deeds to secure happiness in both the worlds.

5] The *Vaachaka Guru* imparts knowledge of *Yoga* and prepares the disciple for the spiritual life.

6] The *Soochaka Guru* teaches how the senses are to be controlled through various types of discipline.

7] The *Kaarana Guru* reveals the unity of the *jivi* and the *Atma*.

8] The *Vihita Guru* clears all doubts, purifies the mind and shows how Self-realization can be attained.

According to Swami, from the last four Gurus, who is the foremost?

- A. Vaachaka Guru
- B. Soochaka Guru
- C. Kaarana Guru
- D. Vihita Guru

10. In His Divine 1986 Guru Poornima Discourse, Swami blesses us with the Ultimate Mantra! "On this Guru Poornima day I do not intend to give you any *Ashtakshari* (eight-letter) or *Panchaakshari* (five-letter) *mantra* based on any particular deity's name. Nor am I enjoining you to study any Upanishad, or the Gita or the *Brahma Sutras*. There is a simple five-letter pronouncement."

What is this five-letter pronouncement/mantra?

- A. God is
- B. I am He (So Hum)
- C. Sai Om
- D. Peace

### ANSWERS:

1B. Our real name.

Swami expands: "The Guru has very often to tell you that you have forgotten your real name or that you have lost the most precious part of yourself and yet are unaware of the loss. The Guru is the physician for the illness which brings about the suffering of alternate birth and death. He is an adept at the treatment needed for the cure.

If you do not get such a Guru, pray to the Lord Himself to show you the way and He will surely come to your rescue."

2A. A stone lotus sprang up.

Swami narrates: "Wherever he placed his foot a stone lotus sprang up. Thus he got the name of Padmapada. When he brought the clothes to the *Guru*, the *guru* was so pleased with the disciple's devotion that he showered his Grace on him, and immediately Padmapada became a great scholar. This is the greatness of service to the Guru and the Grace it can evoke from him.

If you can earn Swami's Grace then everything will be added unto you and you will be happy here and hereafter. Whatever work is being done by you, do it with utmost sincerity."

3D. Observing his commands.

Swami guides us further: "If you have *daya*, *dama* and *dharma* (sympathy, self-control and righteousness), that will take you beyond the realm of the three *gunas* (qualities of the mind); there is no need then for getting a *Naama* (Name) from the *Guru* and repeating it. The *aajna* (command) of the *Guru* or the Lord is even more important than the Name of the *Guru* or the Name of the Lord. Of what use is the repetition of the Name, without at the same time purifying the impulses by the observance of His commands."

4B. The God within.

Swami reveals: "God, the God within, is the *Guru* of *Gurus*. His Grace can make the blind see, the lame walk and the dumb speak. By a mere touch, He can demolish the sins of the past and erect the basis for peace and joy. God can be adored, worshipped and even-imagined or pictured by man only in human form, so long as the consciousness as man persists, so long as man cannot escape from this necessity. How can he travel beyond his limits? He can visualize God only as man, with super-human or supra-human power, wisdom, love, compassion. He can never describe or delineate the formless, the attributeless, the qualityless. It is only by means of form and attribute that one can pray, adore, worship or feel the presence. And the form has to be human. Little minds with no faith may argue that God cannot come as Man but in fact God can be recognized only as Man by human. This explains the statement, "*Dhaivam maanusha ruupena*" - "God through human form," found in the scriptures.

5C. Teachers.

Swami clarifies: "No, they are only teachers."

And then, giving minute details, He imparts us with the knowledge of the true measure of *Brahmaananda*: "What kind of joy does a man experience when he is happy, healthy and contented? What is the type of joy that man derives out of wealth, properties, pleasures and fortune? This is called *Manushyaananda* (human joy). Hundred times more than *Manushyaananda* is *Indhrananda*; hundred times, more than *Indhrananda* is *Dhevendhrananda*; hundred times more than *Dhevendhrananda* is *Dhevaananda*; hundred times more than *Dhevaananda* is *Brihaspathi Ananda*; hundred times more than *Brihaspathi Ananda* is *Prajaapathi Ananda*; hundred times more than *Prajaapathi Ananda* is *Brahmaananda*. This is the true measure of *Brahmaananda*.

....This *Brahmaananda* transcends the material, moral, religious and spiritual aspects of life. The true *Guru* is one who experiences the supreme bliss of *Brahmaananda*. Who is he? None except God has the competence to experience such bliss."

6A. By getting rid of obstacles that deny this experience.

Swami continues: "Man has the potency to elevate himself to this *Ananda*. Only he has to get rid of the obstacles that deny this experience. He is *Brahmam* and so his nature is *Brahma-anandam*. But, he does not know that all he believes he knows is known only as distorted or deluded. His waking experiences are as unreal and self-contrived as his dream experiences."

7B. Help Ever, Hurt Never.

Swami reveals to us: "After writing the 18 *puranas*, he summed up their message in one line." *Paropakarah punyaaya; paapaaya parapeedanam*. (Helping others is meritorious; harming others is sinful). "Help ever; hurt never." Vyasa was the great teacher who gave many profound and sacred truths to man-kind. Hence his birthday is celebrated as *Guru Poornima* (the Full moon day dedicated to the preceptor).

To offer fruits, *dakshina* and other things to a teacher on *Guru Poornima* day is not the right way of worshipping *the guru*. Those who accept such gifts are worldly preceptors. Real *gurus* are to be worshipped by *pradakshina*, by revering them with heart and soul."

8D. Freedom from envy.

Swami reveals: "The true *Guru* is one who has no ego or selfishness, and who can raise the *shishya* to his own level. Donning the saffron robe, mouthing a few *manthras* (sacred formulas) and expounding some texts are the signs of many *Gurus* these days. The signs of a true *Guru* are large-heartedness, absolute selflessness, purity in living, freedom from acquisitiveness, absence of envy, and equal mindedness in his conduct towards everyone.

Freedom from envy is an essential quality in a *Guru* or *shishya*, because envy is the root cause of many evils. The *Guru's* role is to lead the *shishya* on the Godward path. He must teach the *shishya* the true purpose for which each of his sense organs is to be used - his eyes, his tongue, and his limbs. All the senses are to be used for discovering and experiencing the Divine."

9C. Kaarana Guru.

Swami explains why: "Of these eight *Gurus*, the *Kaarana Guru* is the foremost. Through various teachings and practices, he helps the individual to progress from the human to the divine consciousness.

Only the divine can act as such a teacher. All other *Gurus* can be helpful only to a limited extent. There are, moreover, persons who claim to be *Gurus*, but who are really after the disciple's money. They trade in *mantras* and *tantras*. Self-realization is not to be got through *mantras* or *tantras*. Only by the purification of the mind can the Omni-self be realized."

10A. God is.

Swami prods us strongly: "'God is" ("*Devudunnaadu*," in Telugu). Make this your sheet-anchor. If you go on reciting it, thinking over it, acting up to it and conveying it to others, immersing yourself in the bliss of this experience, you will be making the greatest contribution to the welfare of the world.

Consider this *mantra* as the message for this *Guru Poornima* and proclaim it in all circumstances and at all places with all the conviction and strength you can command. The world can be turned into an earthly paradise if you strengthen your faith in God and demonstrate it in your actions. ...From today, develop your faith in God; engage yourselves in dedicated service to society and make your lives purposeful and helpful to those in distress or need. Remember that whomsoever you may serve, you are serving God. This is My benediction for all of you."

## QUIZ ON GURU POORNIMA CELEBRATIONS

### - Based on articles in Heart2Heart

*In the arathi song that is often sung at the conclusion of any Sai Bhajan session, the refrain of the last verse hails Swami as "Sadguru deva", which means, the Divine Teacher of the Supreme Truth. All other attributes ascribed to Bhagavan relate to His divine puissance. But the true significance of His advent consists not merely in the manifestation of His supra-human powers, but in His role as the Divine Guru who has come to awaken in erring and groping mortals, the truth about their essential divinity.*

*While all the other teachers or so called gurus show the way to the Lord, when the Sadguru descends, there is no path, there is no road to travel, as the path itself becomes the goal.*

*This H2H quiz pertains to the 'Cover Story: The Matchless Cosmic Splendour' from the July 2006 issue, which reveals the 'Sadguru' aspect of our Lord Sathya Sai Baba.*

1. 6th July, 1963 was indeed one incredible Guru Pournima day in the life of our Beloved Sai Avathar. What devotees went through before, during and after the event is something indescribable – from devastating depression and blinding delusion to joy and bliss that was euphoric and unprecedented.

Swami, who was literally bed-ridden, with one side of His body totally immobile and stiff, His facial muscles twitching and one hand and one leg lifeless, asked that He be taken down to the prayer hall to see the devotees.

Evidently Baba was too tired by the attempt to speak, for He gestured for water to drink.

Describing the momentous event, Prof. Kasturi, Baba's biographer, writes, "His palsied right hand came towards it... He tried to hold it... His fingers slipped into it... the fingers dipped... He sipped a few drops... He sprinkled, with the fingers of the right hand, a little water on the limp left hand on the pillow above His chest... He sprinkled the water, faintly shaking the fingers, on the left leg too. He stroked the left hand with the right. And with both hands now, he stroked the left leg. He rose; the pillow fell off; we could hear His divine voice calling us, as was ever His wont, "*Premaswaroopulaaraa!*" He had begun His Guru Pournima Discourse! Oh, oh! Our Baba hale, hearty, holy, healthy, heavenly..."

Baba went on to declare, "I have been keeping back from you all these years one secret about Me; the time has come when I can reveal it to you for this is a sacred day."

What secret did Bhagavan reveal on that auspicious Guru Purnima day?

- A. "I am going to manifest lingams every Guru Poornima Day!"
- B. "I am Shiva-Shakthi."
- C. "I will reveal My Divinity every Guru Poornima day!"
- D. "All Gurus' present here were My playmates when I was Krishna!"

2. Guru Poornima celebrations in the Divine presence have always been special. In 1966, Swami returned to Prashanti Nilayam on this day after a long tour of Mumbai, Poona, Gulbarga, Mysore and Madurai and gave all the devotees assembled a few drops of *Amrit* (Nectar) with the exhortation that the tongue which has tasted *Amrit* should no longer relish *Anrit* (Falsehood).

He then inaugurated the branch of State Bank in Prashanti Nilayam and compared the Bank where money is taken and given, to the Spiritual Bank where \_\_\_\_\_ alone is accepted and given...

- A. Money earned through honest means.
- B. Faithful service.
- C. Devotional Singing.
- D. Love.

3. In 1968, Guru Poornima was purely exceptional as Baba was, for the only time in history, out of India. Yielding to the yearnings of African devotees, Swami changed His plan of returning to Mumbai on Guru Poornima Day and spent the whole day showering them with His loving benediction and Grace.

"More than 25,000 persons gathered that morning for the Bhajan," Prof. Kasturi writes, "The Africans joined the chorus led by a Tanzanian, Mr. Zoodoo. For over two hours, Baba walked slowly among the lines of lonely, love-seeking eager hearts, giving each person a handful of sweets and a packet of Vibhuti."

To their amazement, what else did the recipients find inside the Vibhuti packets?

- A. A portrait of a deity.
- B. A Baba ring.
- C. Individual mantras.
- D. A non-perishable flower.

4. It was Guru Poornima Day again in 1971, when the new Hostel building with 100 airy rooms for the girl students of Anantapur College was



inaugurated. It included a separate Auditorium planned and finished in a most artistic and lavish scale with a separate Library hall attached to the college building.

Speaking to the students on that occasion in the presence of the President of India, Sri V. V. Giri and a host of other ministers, educationists and other dignitaries, Swami said: "I am never satisfied with the declaration of intentions. I must \_\_\_\_\_"

What did Swami say about His intentions?

- A. 'I must see to it Sai colleges proliferate in this country!'
- B. "I must reward all VIP's present here for their support!"
- C. "I must taste the Bliss of putting them into action!"
- D. "I must build a new University that is unique!"

5. Swami once said, "Real gurus are to be worshipped not by '**dakshina**' (offering fruits, wealth, etc.) but by "**pradakshina**" (circumambulation) that is, by revering them with heart and soul."

To such a Master, to such a being who has literally taken us by our hand and shown us the royal road to peace, joy and fulfillment walking alongside us all the time, sometimes taking the role of a divine mother, sometimes a loving father, what is the 'Guru Dakshina' (offering) that we should present to Him as we celebrate and adore Him this Guru Poornima?

- A. Living up to His Message
- B. Following discipline in the Ashram
- C. Doing selfless service to Him
- D. Spreading his gospel eagerly to all

## ANSWERS:

1B. "I am Shiva-Shakthi."

On that sacred day, Swami had declared: "I am Shiva-Shakthi, born in the *Gothra* (lineage) of (sage) Bharadwaja, according to a boon won by that sage from Lord Shiva and Mother Shakthi. Shiva Himself was born in the *Gothra* of that sage as Sai Baba of Shirdi; Shiva and Shakthi have incarnated as Myself in his *Gothra* now; Shakthi alone will incarnate as the third Sai in the same *Gothra* in Mysore State."

The audience was stunned, to say the least. What is significant apart from the great revelation that Swami made, is the day Swami chose to enact the whole divine drama, to reveal about Himself and His advent. It was Guru Poornima Day.

## 2D. Love.

Comparing the Bank where money is taken and given, to the Bank where Love alone is accepted and given, Swami said,

"That bank receives deposits and maintains accounts strictly and confidentially. Every little is entered and accounted for - thoughts, deeds, words, good, bad, indifferent. Develop the saving habit, for saving yourself. Here (in the bank) they take *Dhanam* (money); there, they take *Dhyanam* (equanimity or meditation) as deposit."

Each sentence that day was a brilliant flash, revealing the deepest Truth from the lips of the Divine Master.

## 3A. A portrait of a deity.

Prof Kasturi reminisced: "To the amazement of the recipients, **most of them discovered inside the packet, lying ensconced in the midst of the holy ash, enamel or metal portraits of Christ, the Cross, Krishna or Sai Baba Himself.**

The 'Uganda Argus' published an article, announcing that Baba had brought the message of Unity and Service, to the people of that Continent. Baba's discourses as well as activities were also televised and broadcast, so that the entire population could share the inspiration of the Gospel." There was only light, joy and delight in the dark continent.

## 4C. "I must taste the Bliss of putting them into action!"

Swami said: "I am never satisfied with the declaration of intentions. **I must taste the *Aananda* (bliss) of putting them into action!** I express my Love through every act, every intention of mine. More than floods of eloquence in praise of that intention and millions of words written in elaboration of the theme, I insist, by My own example, on immediate and complete fulfillment. This will be a *Gurukul* - a place where teachers and taught will grow together in love and wisdom, as close to the ideas of the hermitages of the past as possible under present conditions. Today is *Guruvaar*, Thursday; it is also Guru Poornima, the Day set apart for adoration of the Guru (the

Preceptor)..... The seed has been planted today; it has to sprout and spread as a tree, heavy with fruits. It has to confer security and sustenance to all."

And over the years how beautifully has this *Sankalpa* (Will) of Bhagavan, the supreme educator of this age, blossomed into 'temples of learning' holding aloft the lofty Sai ideals of integral education where the heart is as important as the head. The Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning was awarded the "A ++" rating by the National Accreditation Council and hailed as the "Crest Jewel" among Universities in India by the University Grants Commission; the Institutes of Sathya Sai Education present now in every continent; the Sathya Sai Schools now run in every corner of the world from Argentina to Africa and Australia; the hugely successful EHV (Education For Human Values) programme organized for children and teenagers by Sai Centres all over the globe – all stand testimony to the grand and glorious revolution that Sai is bringing about in the collective consciousness of the world, more importantly in the hearts and minds of the younger generation.

#### 5A. Living up to His Message.

So this is the message of our Divine Master, who is Himself nothing but love, love and love alone. Love that knows no conditions, love that loves because it knows nothing else, like water that can only flow and air that can only float, God can only Love.

So as we sing "*Manasa Bhajare Gurucharanam*" this Guru Poornima, let's adore Him and **demonstrate our love to Him by living up to His message**. Let our love for Him translate into love for all beings, let love flow whenever we see a fellow human being, let us feel one with His creation, then one day indubitably we will be one with Him. Then, the guru, the disciple, the path and the goal – all would have become one!

## **THE HEALING TOUCH**

### **DANCING TO LIFE'S NEW TUNE**

*By Mr. Y Arvind*

*Enabling and empowering, the Sai Healthcare system delivers hope and relief to millions who would never have otherwise had the confidence to dream of access to state-of-the-art medical treatment in an environment of love and compassion, absolutely free of cost. This is an account of a bouncy kid with a hard-to- forget joyful grin, who came to Sri Sathya Sai Baba's Hospital in Whitefield with lots of hope for a new life when society had turned its back on his family and ruined his precious childhood. How did his world turn around - read this fascinating account.*

#### **The Unforgettable Grin**

Those of us who have read Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* will be familiar with the phrase, 'grinning like a Cheshire cat'; particularly the conversation when the cat disappears and only the grin remains. Lewis Carroll authored another equally hilarious book *Through the Looking Glass* - all this humour from a man who was also a very serious mathematician.

But the grin? Yes, the grin. Coming back to the grin, it was something similar to that of the cat, except the grin had a young boy's face attached to it. The grin belonged to a sprightly young lad I had met in the hospital that day. I recollected his words, "I want to dance. I want to learn dancing, and become a professional dance choreographer for movies." A grand ambition indeed for a child who had undergone cardiac surgery; but then, when have physical limitations deterred determined minds from achieving their goals?

The son of Srinivas and Shanta, Venkatesh was studying the 6th grade at the Akshara Sri Vidya Public School located in Peenya Second Stage, Bangalore. His mother was part of the administrative staff in the same school. He has a younger brother by name Raviteja also studying in the same school.

#### **Poor Health Robs Childhood of Normalcy**

The fact that Venkatesh had health concerns became apparent when he was five months old. His parents approached local doctors who prescribed standard remedies but the matter refused to subside. By the age of 10 months, he was unable to hold any food down and would throw up with alarming regularity. They finally went to a specialist who, suspecting a cardiac ailment, directed them to Jayadeva Heart Institute. The doctors there reckoned that he had a heart problem, but said he was too young and physically weak to undergo an angiogram. Apparently, the minimum safe weight for a child to undergo an invasive cardiology procedure is 10 kilograms. He was put on specific medical management and the family pulled

on. They finally got the angiogram done in the year 2002. The diagnosis was that he had not one, but two complications!

I opened the patient file and checked – the boy suffered from a condition called PDA Patent Ductus Arteriosus, which meant that there was an abnormal connection between the aorta and the Pulmonary artery because of which his pure and impure blood were getting mixed. This opening also affected his lungs since the pressure with which the heart was pumping blood was pushing the blood back to the lungs. The second complication was multiple Coarctation of the Aorta (CoA), which is a condition wherein the aorta that supplies pure blood from the heart to the rest of the body gets narrowed in more than one place, and consequently the blood supply to the peripheries of the body is reduced. This narrowing puts more pressure on the heart since the heart will have to beat against its own outflow...not a pretty situation to be in. If left unchecked, both these conditions can rapidly damage both the lungs and heart and...all of us know what happens when the heart stops beating.

### **Dread of Exorbitant Medical Expenses**

The mother narrates the trauma the family faced when "we were informed that the procedures will cost us Rs. 27,000 (or about US \$700) initially with an extra expenditure on tests and medicines of Rs. 8000 (or US \$ 200). We could not afford such a large sum with our meager income. My husband is a granite fitter by profession and his job is not regular."

"Not regular?" I asked

"You see, he gets work only when granite is involved, and that means he has to go to construction sites where his expertise will be useful. And he cannot go directly; he has to go through a contractor...so his work is not continuous. He is able to earn around Rs. 3000 per month. We manage because the school where I work is close by. Our expenses are not much."

"How did you come here?" I asked, trying to changing track.

"We lived for a while in Basaveswar Nagar and had a neighbour by name Lalitamma – she had been a patient in this hospital. She came back after surgery and told us about this place - how the medical care was totally free of charge and it was better than most other hospitals. So I took leave from my school duties and came over here with my boy. After the doctors saw him, they asked me if we wanted to go ahead with the surgery since surgery generally was the last resort. They also told me that surgery at such a young age will have lasting impact."

Shanta shrugged her shoulders when she explained the inevitability of her choice, "My son was getting worse and surgery was the only solution. We agreed and he was admitted shortly afterwards. The surgery went off well and there were no complications. I was so frightened when I first heard of the diagnosis, but now I am not at all afraid. This hospital, the doctors, the sisters, they are all so nice. This place is really a temple."

Now that she was more relaxed, I quizzed her further. "But what about the other expenses?"

"That I am able to manage", she smiled and continued, "For example, the food in the hospital canteen is good. And it costs only 10 to 12 rupees. Same thing in Majestic (Bangalore's Central Bus and Railway Station) costs 25 rupees and there we get very less in quantity. Also, I don't travel much. I stay in the attendee complex in the hospital. It costs Rs. 100 for two people to travel all the way to my place and I am able to avoid that expense by staying here."

"In-Patient attendee complex, The Salarpuria block?" I clarified, and received a nod of assent.

### **Dreams of Dancing**

I turned my attention to the young aspirant who had not stopped displaying his sparkling teeth, "What do you want to become in your life?"

"Dancer!" came the prompt reply. I smiled at the uncommon reply and the grin grew wider. I was used to hearing, 'doctor', 'engineer', 'lawyer', and the most common answer given by the parents or relatives, '...he will become what God wants him to be...' Dancing was something of a hobby...

"Dancer?" I repeated.

"Professional dance choreographer," he explained. "I want to learn dance, and become a professional dance choreographer for films." My eyebrows arched at the boy's earnestness.

"Prabhu Deva?" I queried referring to the famous South Indian dance icon.

"Yes! Yes!" the boy became animated. "I want to dance like him. I am already taking dancing lessons."

I turned to his mother, "Where do you send him?"

"There is a dance school in Chandra layout and also in Girinagar." She looked proudly at her son. "He wants to progress gradually, first learn dance, then become a dance master, then dance director and then professional dance choreographer."

"Does his father approve?" I asked.

"Oh yes! He does not have any problem." She put an arm round her son's shoulder and said, "Many of his friends also are learning dance."

I asked her the question that I always reserve for the end of my conversations. "How do you feel now that your son has received a new lease of life?"

"This is indeed a new life for my child. Really, I am full of gratitude to Sai Baba. I am lucky to get this chance. I will tell many people about this hospital but to avail this chance is their destiny."

I left the ward with the words 'the chance is their destiny' ringing in my ears. Even as I type, my fingers move on their own accord. The words originating in my mind, the brain processing it and moving the right fingers to the right keys...how many of us realise that what we take for granted as common reflex is denied to the less fortunate among us. Yes! Training can make a person perform tasks better and more efficiently. But the body and mind must both be willing. Without a seed, there can be no tree. Pleasure is an interval between two pains. It follows that pain is an interval between two pleasures. Gold lies hidden in the bosom of earth, a pleasure to be in the embrace of the womb. In the hands of men it is precious, and so is 'purified' - beaten, twisted, carved to become more precious...Pain. But when finally it finds place adoring the brow of The King...Pleasure!

Let us count our blessings and use adversity to steel ourselves. For how will we know the pleasure of light, when we do not know darkness?

*"Much of your pain is self-chosen.*

*It is the bitter potion by which the physician within you heals your sick self.  
Therefore trust the physician, and drink his remedy in silence and tranquility;  
For his hand, though heavy and hard, is guided by the tender hand of the  
Unseen,*

*And the cup he brings, though it burn your lips, has been fashioned of the clay  
which the potter has moistened with His own sacred tears."*

*- Khalil Gibran*

**YOUR SAY**

***- Feedback from our readers on the June 2008 issue***

**Feedback on the Cover Story: *The Spectacular Saga of Sai In Kashmir***

Dear Editor,

I felt very emotional. Reading the article brings tears to the eyes. It is no wonder that even the GOC Northern Command Gen Malhotra, who had the blessed opportunity of hosting "The Supreme Commander of the Universe", had tearful eyes when he could sense that "paradise on earth" was coming to its end when Swami left for Delhi. Even the skies over Kashmir cried out loud resulting in the inclement weather.

It was great to see the young brothers C.Srinivas, Kamal Sawhney, Rupak Changkakoti, and Sudarshan and some of the other youngsters soldiers in white! How time flies.

Sairam.

Dr Narayan Ramachandran, Consultant in Orthopaedics & Trauma  
Armed Forces Hospital, Muscat, Oman

---

Dear Heart to Heart Team,

Sai Ram. Your work and love for Swami was amply shown in 'Swami in Kashmir'. It was a Master piece.

Just between you and me--I am envious of those who went with Swami to Kashmir and others who are in such close contact with him spiritually! Hope Swami is not listening!! I am just kidding. God bless them. Please continue your good work.

Mrs Mayur

---

Dear Friends in Sai,

Thanks, what a beautiful story and videos. Because of your 'His-storytelling', it was as if I was there too! What a blissful time we all have now with Swami here on earth...And yes, no Kali Yuga but Sathya Yuga is the best slogan for now and ever!



In love and light,

Titia from Holland

**Feedback on: 'Sai Anandam' - A Garden Of Divine Blossoms**

Dear Radio Sai Team,

I just read the H2H story of Sai Anandam and was touched by it. The Sai students are doing a wonderful job! They have managed to change the destinies of these children and I truly applaud them. This is one example of great Seva and am sure Baba has been there as a guiding and supporting force for these "Super Sai Students". These Sai students have set an example for the society and have proved that all it takes to do Selfless Seva is a Pure heart and Determination.

Sai Ram,

Ishita

---

Dear Sir, Sai Ram!

I am moved by this inspiring story and thank you very much for publishing this article. Otherwise, the larger community would not have known the yeomen service rendered by these youth. I am not only touched by the efforts of former students of Sai, but also by the gesture of the owner of the house who vacated it and made it available to serve these needy children.

With Love & Respect,

S. Cuganesan

---

Om Sai Ram!

The article on "Sai Anandam" by B.K Misra, is beautifully written. It needs to circulate widely, like Sunshine! Congratulations to Sri Misra and to H2H!

Sincerely,

Sri

**Feedback on: *Mesmerizing Moments with the Divine Master - Interview with Mrs. Rani Subramanian - Part 3***

Sairam,

God Bless you all for making this Rani Ma article available to all Sai devotees. This is a wonderful article. Thanks to Rani Ma for her beautiful narration of

her journey with Sai and her wisdom and inspiration to all of us to constantly contemplate and practice the teachings of Sai for our own inner peace and liberation.

In Sai,

Radha Garuda

---

Dear Sir,

The articles by Mrs. Rani Subramaniam are very inspiring and provide spiritual guidance. She shares with us her experiences in her spiritual journey with the talks, instructions and blessings she received from Swami.

Is it possible for someone at Radio Sai to make an audio version, as I would like to hear and download her talk. Swami's communications with her are very high on the path of sadhana. Some of the advice given by Swami to her are so important for all of us on the path of sadhana. Thanks,

Aum Sairam,

Gopal Mehta, Toronto, Canada

**Feedback on: *The Love of Law and the Law of Love***

Sai Ram to dear Heart to Heart Team,

Thank you for publishing this article. It is a very useful as it helps us to realise many important laws of life. I found it was easy to relate the content to many of our own experiences in life. It gave me lots of strength and courage, promoting my faith and encouraging me on the path of surrender.

Thanks once again and Sairam,

Niranjala

---

Sai Ram,

I have known Dr Pavan for more than 40 years and meet him and Devi regularly. I am aware of the featured events, but this article throws a new light on Karma and how we should face its effects. Well written and commendable analysis and advice from a long standing and experienced devotee. Similar articles should be encouraged.

Dr K Nadanachandran, Canberra, Australia.

---

Sai Ram,

I have just read the words of Dr Sara Pavan on surrendering. I am in a dark and uncomfortable place right now. I am due to join the army on July 28th this year. I have been sent an email from a loving friend informing me that I am joining forces with evil. I am not an evil person and now I fear my future greatly with whichever choice I make....but I sit hear right now with the word Surrender in my mind and I can feel my heart strongly so I will let the fear of this decision go and think of Sai Baba. Whichever decision I make I shall make having surrendered. May my karma and suffering be released. Thank you. *(Name and country withheld)*

**Feedback on: *Musings On Avatars Part 4***

Thank you for sharing so profoundly and simplifying complicated mythological stories to me. I gained a lot of understanding from your article about Avatars. For me Swami is Poornaavatar.

Anitha

**Feedback on: *The Cab Ride***

Dear Heart2Heart Team,

Greetings and love from Kobe Japan. The 'Cab Ride' article is so lovely. It reminds us to open our heart and helping hand to the persons who are in really in need - the aged and weak. The cab driver played his part so nicely; such persons are really worthy of praise. They feel God's love and help in time of difficulties. Thank you Sir,

With Sai Love,

Ram Chugani

---

The story 'The Cab Ride' made me cry. Keep up the great work!

With love,

Mala, Australia

**Feedback on: *The Little Girl Who Dared To Wish***

After reading the above article I realized that many people suffer in silence not knowing that there are people out there who experience the same pain, humiliation and trauma. I try on a daily basis to encourage people to be more tolerant, forgiving, loving and generous with their kind words and deeds. One never knows how and when a kind word may make someone feel better or forget their pain for a fleeting moment and just by doing or saying something kind, one has brightened a dreary day.

I also believe that people who spread gossip, jump to wrong conclusions and assume that everyone is "after" them, need to be directed onto a path of righteous living so that they can see how much of damage their thoughtless acts cause.

My wish is for everyone to speak kindly, act with good intentions and then hopefully this world will become more peaceful.

Thank you for the thought provoking story and may anyone who is experiencing negative behaviour from others be strong to overcome that hurdle.

Om Sai Ram,

Amritha Bagwandeem, Johannesburg, South Africa

---

This story was very inspirational. I too have a cerebral palsy child and so I could really empathise with the content of the story. I hope a day would come in India also, when everyone would look upon cerebral palsy children as equal among all. Please do try and publish such stories often. Thank you.

With warm regards,

Bhavani.

---

Dear All,

Thank you so much for the inspiring article *The Girl Who Dared To Wish*. My daughter was born blind and many times had to suffer the thoughtlessness of people's teasing and unkind words. With Swami's grace she has grown into a well adjusted young lady of 26 years, and is looking forward to her 6th visit to Puttaparthi at the end of July. Through Swami we have met many kind and thoughtful people who have restored our faith in human nature. Life is not always easy but it can be very rewarding. Please keep the articles coming.

Jai Sai Ram,

Susan Hardwick, England.

Dear Heart2Heart Team, Sai Ram,

Your article *The little Girl Who Dared to Wish* is a true portrayal of what can happen in schools. Some students bully and make fun of those weaker in study and the handicapped.

Unfortunately today's education is about money and degrees and not morality. Swami has given us 5 Human Values and if we practice these in schools and colleges then we will see peace and love in all countries. We should pray may all people be happy.

In Puttaparthi and Whitefield when we see Swami's students, we observe how disciplined and how much Swami loves them.

With Love and Prayers

Ram Chugani, Kobe, Japan

**Feedback on: *Near And Dear Forever***

Dear Mrs Dipali Arun,

Thank you so much for sharing your wonderful experiences with Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. It was very inspiring and after reading your article, I feel, it would be wonderful if my children could go to school at Puttaparthi and get some wonderful divine experiences, and have divine vision of the Lord. You are a very fortunate person.

May God bless you always.

Padma, USA

---

Sairam!

This is a great article! I was truly inspired. I wish this touches every Sai devotee. Thanks for posting this article in Radio Sai.

Thanks,

Ananth, Singapore

**Feedback on the Quizzes**

Sai Ram!

I am writing to you to share my thoughts about the online Multi-Faith Quiz that I played today. I am a student of Bal Vikas in Group-2 and I really enjoyed the questions based on all the religions and their symbols. I would suggest you give such quizzes for the junior level as well, so that even small children can answer these quizzes. I am very interested in mythology and so I would love to answer such quizzes regularly. I came to know about this while I was tuned to Radio Sai Global Harmony. I would surely discuss about this with all my friends and I know that they would switch to the internet to play the quiz and other Spiritual Games.

Regards,

Shraddha Jha, Jamshedpur, Jharkhand, India.

### **General Feedback**

My name is Pepy and I am from Israel. One day I was chatting with one of my new friends about spiritually and then she asked me if I have a spiritual Master. I didn't understand what she meant. She gave me your web site and told me that I'll be fascinated - and it was true. And this happened only a week ago.

I am a believer, though not religious, but I believe in God. I know He exists and that all human beings are children of one God.

I read your articles and have become very excited. I will be glad to learn more and more.

Respectfully,

Pepy

---

Sairam Sir,

I have been going through the various articles published in the magazines from 2003 onwards, for the past three months. Still I am unable to complete my reading. It is like ocean of love of Swami. Whenever I read any article some new idea of Swami strikes at the mind e.g. golden principles of Seva, Universe creation and our role, how to surrender to Swami and 'where do I stand'. This leads to Self enquiry.

*Koti pranams* to Swami for creating the spark in me to read the articles. Let all in the world read these magazines and enjoy the grace of Swami and be blessed.

Jai Sai Ram,

Mahaveer Nabhirajjain

