

## HEART 2 HEART

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## **BETWEEN YOU AND US**

In an historic discourse in Brindavan, Bangalore on the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 1974, Swami had said, “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 (Reality of the Spirit) of each being in order to reveal the Divine which is the basis on which the entire Cosmos rests....”. The recently concluded 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday conveyed this emphatically. It gave a glorious glimpse to the world of how this profound declaration is silently taking shape in every region and every corner of the world. The sense of oneness, the feeling of solidarity among the tens and thousands that had gathered from nearly 150 countries really made you feel – yes, the world is surely getting better. Each of them had a wonderful tale of how Swami had touched their lives with His love and how they are eager to share this love to as many as they can. It was really a practical demonstration of how Unity and can lead to Divinity. Incidentally this was the theme of the 8<sup>th</sup> World Conference too – ‘Unity-Purity-Divinity’ - which was held two days prior to the Birthday. The message went straight home to everyone’s heart.

Yes, the World Conference and more importantly, the Birthday celebrations passed off gloriously. That it was an event of extraordinary significance in the mission of the Sai Avathar and left an indelible mark in the hearts of everyone who was present here in Prashanthi Nilayam need hardly be mentioned. But not many people know how the Birthday celebrations actually happened. To think of it, how lakhs of people from India and abroad were housed in the small town of Puttaparthi is amazing! And again how these hundreds and thousands were served with free food for the seven days of the Birthday week is equally incredible! More than 170 tons of food material were cooked. Nearly seven lakh devotees were served with meals. Breakfast and snacks were served to more than four lakh devotees. The Hill View Stadium was transformed into a palace. All this happened in the seven day period - 18<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> Nov. But how did this happen? Who did the planning? Was every activity sub-contracted to professionals? What were the devotees saying about the arrangements and the celebrations? How did it feel being in Puttaparthi, being with Swami those few days? And finally what experiences did the devotees take back home? To bring out all this for you, this time we have our cover story on the 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday – not on what happened in front of your eyes, but what happened behind the scenes. You are surely going to be inspired when you read moving anecdotes of sacrifice and wonderful stories of divine love that this cover story is composed of.

Sathya Sai is Love, Energy and Sacrifice personified. In a very revealing discourse during the Guru Pournima celebrations in 1963, after Swami cured Himself of a week long paralytic stroke in a trice by sprinkling a few drops of water on His body, He declared for the first time in His Avatharhood, “I am Shiva - Shakthi *Swarupa*” meaning, the embodiment of all consciousness and all energy pervading the whole universe. Shivarathri – the auspicious night dedicated to Lord Shiva which falls in the 26<sup>th</sup> of this month, we know, is a festival of immense significance in Prashanthi Nilayam. It is often on this

occasion when our Lord Sai chooses to give us a glimpse of His Power and Glory. The *Lingodbhavam* – emergence of the *Linga* from His mouth – is a divine spectacle and liberating experience for every devotee privileged to witness it during this festival. To relive those blissful moments, our Photo Gallery is on this theme. You will also find two beautiful feature articles elaborating on the principle of Shiva-Sai.

How Sai enters each devotee's life is fascinating. Just as no two leaves in a tree, or two faces in the world are totally identical, no two stories of how Swami came into devotees' lives are the same, be they distinguished personalities or disregarded destitutes. You are going to be fascinated reading the story of Prof. Anil Kumar, a long standing devotee of Swami, best known as the translator of Bhagavan's discourses, in the H2H Special section.

The month of January saw a lot of activities, the highlight being the Annual Sports and Cultural Meet of Swami's Institute. As every year, the event was a thrilling sport and drama extravaganza. Do not miss reading the full account of this in our Prashanthi Diary. We have decorated it with lots of pictures to bring the whole event alive in front of your eyes.

We also have a beautiful article on the Vedas. If you are new to the Vedas or want to know what are their significance in one's life, read the feature article by Prof. Venkataraman. In fact, we will be having a series of articles by him on the Vedas in the coming issues. Vedic chants and their significance are so much emphasized by Bhagavan time and again and it is time we know the great treasure that is hidden in them and benefit from it.

The Vedas are chanted every day during Bhagavan's Darshan. The sacred hymns purify our senses – both within and without when we chant them, just like a lamp placed at the door lights up the inside of the house as well as the outside. Let's fill ourselves with the sacred vibrations of these holy hymns. Let's make our own hearts a *Prashanti* – abode of Peace where our Lord Sai Shiva can reside.

Lots of Love,  
H2H Team.

## SPIRITUAL BLOSSOMS

### SATHYA SAI SPEAKS

#### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SHIVARATHRI

This is the month of the holy festival of Shivarathri which falls on 26th of February this year. Let's recapitulate Swami's message given on this holy day a decade ago, in 1996.

#### **The Trinity in Man**

The cosmic process *shrishti* (creation), *sthithi* (sustenance) and *layam* (dissolution) goes on in every human being. Creation is the outcome of *sankalpa* (or thought). *Sthithi* is protection of creation. *Layam* is the merger of creation in its source. *Srishti*, *Sthithi* and *Layam* are also identified with the three qualities - *Sathva*, *Rajas* and *Thamas*...The three *gunas* (or qualities) represent the Trinity (Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheshvara). The Trinity represent the *Thrilokas* (three Worlds). The three worlds and the Trinity are present in every human being. The three are to be regarded as one and worshipped as *Shivam*. What is *Shivam*? It is the embodiment of Auspiciousness. When man recognizes the unified form of the Trinity his humanness acquires auspiciousness.

In a government there are different departments like education, finance, etc. Likewise in the spiritual field also there are different departments. They are: Creation, Sustenance and Dissolution. Each department has a head. Each head has to govern his department on right lines. There is an overlord presiding over all departments. He is like the Prime Minister in a cabinet. He is God. He is called Allah. By attributing different names and forms to God, Divinity is fragmented in various ways. The one Divine is responsible for the threefold cosmic process. These three aspects of God can be seen in the English word GOD. 'G' represents Generation - *Srishti*. 'O' represents Organization - *Sthithi*. 'D' represents Dissolution - *Layam*. GOD represents the unity of the three aspects.

There is a misunderstanding about these three. *Layam* is considered as destruction or dissolution. Its real meaning is mergence. 'O' represents organization. It means protection. 'G' stands for generation (creation). Brahma, Vishnu and Eeshvara are three potencies Immanent in man. To understand this it is essential to follow the spiritual path. **Spirituality does not mean leading a lonely ascetic life. Spirituality means getting rid of attachment and hatred and looking upon the whole humanity as one. Everyone should understand this inner meaning of spirituality.**

#### **Significance of Shivarathri**

Shivarathri is an auspicious night. Man is endowed with infinite potencies. All that you experience by way of seeing, hearing and the like are reflections of

the inner being. The significance of this experience has to be properly understood. For instance, today is Shivarathri day. You experience the night every day. These are ordinary nights. They are nights of darkness. But Shivarathri is an auspicious night. How is it auspicious? There are sixteen aspects for the mind. The moon is the presiding deity for the mind. Of the sixteen phases of the moon, today in the fourteenth day of *Margashersha* month (lunar calendar), fifteen of the phases are absent. On this day it is possible to get full control of one's mental faculties. Hence it is considered an auspicious day.

**Auspiciousness consists in diverting the mind towards God. This calls for getting rid of the inherited animal tendencies in man. This is the occasion to recognise the omnipresence of the Divine in all beings and in all objects. It follows that whomsoever you adore or condemn, you are adoring or condemning God. You must follow the injunction: Help ever, hurt never.**

Every human being has sacred qualities, based on his *Shivathvam* (Divine essence). Hence man should realise his inherent divinity, though his body is made up of the five elements. Thereby humanness is transformed into divinity. **The human birth is intended for the pursuit of *Dharma*. *Dharma* implies harmony in thought, word and deed. When every person realises his essential divine nature, the entire world will be transformed. The body and the mind are mere instruments. Man's reality is the *Aathma* (Self). Man should use the instruments given to him to perform his duties well and realise his oneness with God.**

### **Unity in Diversity**

All the phenomena in Nature proclaim the glory of the Divine. Why foster religious differences? Let everyone carry out the dictates of the Divine, who governs the universe. Everything that happens is by the Will of God. The principle teaching of the *Vedhas* is that all men should strive together in harmony and share their joys together in amity. Through unity, humanity can achieve purity, leading to divinity. The three great enemies of man are lust, anger and greed. These have to be eliminated. The greatest quality in man is love. Love is God. Live in love.

- Discourse in Poornachandhra Auditorium on 17-2-1996.

- Heart2Heart Team

## CONVERSATIONS WITH SAI –

### PART 17

*(Continued from the previous issue)*

#### **Desires Create Our World**

**H (HISLOP):** Would Swami please explain His statement that the world is a mirror?

SAI: The world is a mirror, and life is the reflection of God. If the mirror is pure, only God is seen. The opposites, good and bad, are no longer seen at all. There is only God. If the world is not seen, then there is neither mirror nor any reflection. We have the idea of the world only because of the mirror effect. The mirror (world) exists only as long as our desires exist. 'World' means the inside sense world. We apprehend the world through the senses. These senses are seen outside. It is only because of the illusion of the senses that there appears to be a body. A corpse is burned when the wood is set afire. The inner senses correspond to the wood. When they are burned through inquiry and *sadhana* (spiritual practice), the body automatically disappears. Both inquiry and practice are necessary.

**H:** But, Swami, our experience is that objects exist independent of our consciousness of them.

**SAI:** For us the world exists only if we are there to see it. If we are blind, we do not see it. If we are in a faint, it does not exist for us. For us, the world is as we see it. It takes shape for us according to our viewpoint. If your viewpoint is that all is God, then everything we see is God. Suppose we take a picture with a camera. Do the trees enter the lens and impress themselves on the film, or does the camera reach out and grasp the trees?

**H:** The trees impress themselves on the camera.

#### **How The Heart Is Like A Camera**

**SAI:** Wrong! I take a picture of a person who does not want his picture taken. Will the refusal prevent the picture? Or, put it in another way. The person wants his picture taken. Will that result in the picture? The heart is like a film that can capture the image of Swami. If the film is latent and clean, it can capture Swami even if He does not want it. But if the camera is without such a film, if the heart is impure and clouded, then Swami's image cannot be there even if He wants it. The body is the camera, the mind is the lens, the intelligence is the switch, and love is the film.

**H:** But Swami's image in the heart is His form. Krishna says, 'The devotee need picture the *Paramatma* as un-picturable, that is enough'. What does that mean, and how does it apply to the image of Swami in the heart?

**SAI:** The image need not be that of Swami. **It may be love, which is Swami.** First, God is realized in form. He is seen everywhere in that form. Then God may be realized without form, since all forms are impermanent. A learning child, sees an elephant statue. On the statue, 'elephant' is written in words. The child cannot read the words, but learns about 'elephant' from its name as he hears it. Once he has learned to read, then just the word remains and from that he understands 'elephant'. The statue, the form, is impermanent, but the words remain as long as the language endures. The word 'elephant' represents elephant in its formless state. Likewise, once the devotee learns the language of divinity, then God need not be pictured; the word is enough. But one learns about God through form and the name.

**H:** We see here the form of God as Swami. How are we to understand the form? Does God appear only as that one form? If the question is improper, may Swami please disregard it.

**SAI:** The question is all right. Wires in the room are everywhere, but only one bulb is connected into the wires. Only the one light is seen in full power. The same current is in all the wires. The Avathar is one only, and this one body is taken by the Avathar. Of course, a brilliant light spreads outward as rays, but the rays are not different from the light.

### **The Secret Of Form And The Formless**

**H:** Swami, please go a little deeper into 'form' and 'formless'.

**SAI:** The body is not the truth we attribute to it. An example: a man worships the mother who gave him birth for 30 years. He massages her feet, prostrates before her, gazes into her eyes with love, listens to her voice, is warmed and made happy by her affectionate and loving regard. At age 60, the mother dies. At once the son cries out, 'Mother, Mother, why have you left me?' Why did the man cry out? The body he worshipped was there, the feet he massaged daily were there, but he cried out that his mother was not there, that she had left him. We have to conclude that even though the man had for the past 30 years regarded the body and mother as one and the same, yet when the mother died he instantly knew that 'mother' was not body and that 'mother' had departed even though body remained.

So, of what value was the body, which was never the mother, even though for a time it had been regarded as mother? Contemplating this mystery, it is apparent that had it not been for the body, the mother could not have been known. It was only through the medium of body that the man had been able to experience and thus know the tender, loving, sublime quality of the mother which resulted in love rising up in his heart. **The formless, timeless quality of 'mother' could be known and attained only through the impermanent form.**

**H:** Swami! This is wonderful! This explains the real significance of form.

**SAI:** The same is true of the formless transcendent divine. Without form, it is non-existent for us. **We become cognizant of the divine through the medium of form.**

**H:** Sai has revealed the secret of form and formless! How is the transition made from worship of God in form to worship of the formless divine?

**SAI:** The transition is made by full adoration of God in form, then seeing that beloved form in everyone and in every place. Then loving others comes naturally and easily.

**H:** When Swami is present, His form is easily seen and may be worshipped, but when Swami's physical person is absent, should one form a mental image of Him so that one may continue to see His form?

### **Pour The Mind Into The Mental Image**

**SAI:** Yes. One should have a mental image of a form of God, fully developed, with one's mind poured into that form. When the image of God is seen outside, it is qualified dualism. When seen in the mind it is qualified monism. When the form is absorbed into the Atma, that is *Advaita*, non-dualism.

The two preliminary steps are not separate stages; they are contained in *Advaita*, as buttermilk and butter are contained in milk. The image of God seen outside should be taken into the mind and then into the soul.

**H:** What is the best way to form the mental image of God?

**SAI:** If you wish, the form you see can be taken as an image. Or a photo can be taken.

**H:** If a photo of Swami, or the directly perceived image of Swami is taken as the mental image, no doubt the concentration should not waver from the chosen image?

**SAI:** The mind should be steady on the one chosen image of God. When an image is made of silver, the eyes, hair, mouth, and skin are all silver.

**H:** Please say that again.

**SAI:** **The mind is poured into the mould of the image so that the mind is the image of God .**

**H:** I see. That is most enlightening! But Swami we feel happier when in Swami's physical presence and not so happy when Swami is away.

**SAI:** You are identified with your physical form and so you look to the form of another. **When you are less attached to the physical form, your happiness will be more even.**

## How Does Swami Work

**H:** One regards himself as a son of Swami. Swami is as the Mother, and we confide in Him, directly, if possible but if not then by prayer and by writing to him.

**SAI:** There is an endless flow of letters coming to Swami. Swami reads all the letters and, about 10 a. m., the letters are burned. Swami does everything Himself, so everything is done right. **Swami never sleeps.** At the middle of the night, He turns off the light and rests in the bed because if light is on devotees gather. Swami has no need of sleep. But men need at least four hours of sleep; it is essential for them.

People think that Baba rests in the afternoon until 4 p.m. **But He never rests. He is never tired. He is always working.** People are upset when three or four relatives visit. But Baba's visitors are endless. Baba is attending to every detail of His scholars and colleges, and to the millions of His devotees. And, for most people, the responsibility for their work rests elsewhere. But Baba is responsible for the results as well as for the work.

**H:** Baba is responsible also for His other worlds, is He not?

**SAI:** Yes. For saints, Rishis and yogis everywhere, Swami is attending to the guidance, protection and welfare of these, wherever they may be.

**H:** I mean Swami is responsible for the entire universe, not just this world?

**SAI:** It is like this. **Baba is the switch. The switch is turned on and all goes forward automatically.** As the key is turned in a car, then all parts of the car work automatically. In a similar way, the universe is automatically regulated. **So called 'miracles' are not miracles, nor do they prove divinity.** Baba's endless work in all the worlds - easy, no weight, always happy - that is the 'miracle'.

## Swami's Blissful State

**H:** Considering the endless problems that Swami deals with in this world, it is strange that He is always in bliss, always happy.

**SAI: Regardless of the event, Swami is always happy, always blissful.**

**H:** Please excuse a question that may seem rude: Swami seems to have different moods. What does this mean?

**SAI:** A boat glides over the flood but does not allow the flood to enter it. Just as one is at peace in a boat into which no water comes, no worries or concerns enter into Baba's state of bliss. But ordinary men do not do the same as Baba. They allow 'water' - all sorts of worries and concerns - to enter the boat, and there is no happiness, no bliss, no peace of mind. Baba's bliss is ever present, regardless of the world.

Consider that each month Baba must meet an expense budget of hundreds of thousands of rupees. On His shoulders rest all the affairs of the schools, the ashram, the people within His physical circle, the interviews, the petitions, the correspondence, the problems. That is on the body level.

At the same time on the mental level, Baba is with those who yearn for God, no matter in what area of the world - saints, yogis, rishis, spiritual aspirants everywhere, watching them, guiding them, fostering every movement of heart or mind towards God.

**But Baba is untouched by all this. His bliss is constant, unchanging. Even outwardly His bliss is constant,** even though it may appear that He is angry, impatient, aloof or distant. The 'anger' is just sound, because the sound of anger is necessary to correct certain situations. In like fashion, 'aloofness' or 'distance' is just the appropriate role at that time and place. In fact, Baba's love is constant and unchanging, just as is His bliss.

**H:** Baba has the inconceivably immense task of the universe. How can He afford to spend time talking to people like us?

**SAI:** Baba, with His limitless bodies, is everywhere doing the tasks. 'A thousand heads, hands, feet' – '*Sahasra sheershaa purushah sahasraaksha sahasrapaad*'. It is just this body that sits here talking with you. That is Baba's omnipresence. The *Avathar* is beyond the 5 elements. He is the Creator. Arjuna was the controller, Krishna the Creator. Science is outside; wisdom is inside. Man, turning outward, creates machines, but there his control ends. Witness the three dead astronauts of a few months ago. God is not subject to any limitation. He is the Creator of the elements, their Modifier, their Preserver, their Destroyer.

**H:** The *Avathar* is never born, but He appears to take birth in a body which then gradually grows to full size in the ordinary way. The bodies that one sees are impermanent, and Baba does not look to be different.

**SAI:** The *Avathar* takes only the body such as you have described. The difference is that men come into bodies with tendencies and the results of actions. **Baba takes this body without any tendencies, completely free, with no desires or attachments, and always happy.**

**H:** When one sees Baba as a form amongst all the perishable forms, cannot one point to Him as the one reality amongst all these perishable dream-like forms?

**SAI:** Yes. The one reality is Baba. **'Baba' means Being, Awareness, Bliss, Atma - one Reality.**

*(To be continued)*

**- Heart2Heart Team**

## CHINNA KATHA

*- A Little Story from Bhagavan Baba*

### PLAYING MARBLES WITH THE NAME OF GOD

There was once a boy, who picked up a precious gem, bright and round, and used it for playing marbles on the road, with his comrades. A merchant dealing in precious stones chanced to pass along that road, and his discerning eye fell on the gem. He approached the boy, took him aside and offered to pay him fifty rupees in exchange for the gem.

If the boy knew the value of fifty rupees he would have known the value of the gem! He went to his mother and told her that a stranger had tempted him with fifty rupees in return for the marble he played with. She was surprised that it was so costly and she said, "Do not go out of the compound with it. Play in the garden with your friend" setting limits after finding out it had some value.

The merchant had no sleep that night. He was planning to secure the gem from those simple folk, so that he could sell it at a huge profit to some millionaire or maharaja. He discovered the house where the boy lived and moved up and down that road hoping to see the boy. When he saw the boy play with it as if it was a cheap marble, his heart was wrung in agony. The boy threw it on the floor. His mother emerged just at the moment from the inner apartments and it struck her foot and fell under a bush. He spoke to the boy asking for the gem in exchange for a hundred rupees, and again, for five hundred rupees! The son ran into the house in tears, complaining about the stranger who would not let him alone. The mother came out into the garden and begged the merchant to go away.

The merchant grasped the chance. He told the mother that he was ready to give even a thousand rupees on the spot if the marble was placed in his hand! On hearing this, she forbade the child to play with it outside the house. He could play only within the rooms. The merchant could not be shooed off like that. He appeared the next day in front of the house. He held out ten thousand rupees as his offer for the marble.

The mother refused to part with it but kept it now in an iron safe, under lock and key! When the merchant came the next day with fifty thousand rupees she took it to a bank and deposited it in their safety vaults.

**You are also playing marbles with the Name of God, unaware of its value. Once you realise its worth, you will keep it in your heart of hearts as the most precious treasure. Know that the Name is the key to success in your search for consolation, confidence, courage, illumination and liberation.**

- Heart2Heart Team

## COVER STORY

### BEHIND THE GLORIOUS 80<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY

#### **“A Thrilling Experience...With the Eternal Enigmatic Being”**

“It was a thrilling experience... an experience that is etched in my memory for ever!” a Sai devotee, with an expression of great fulfillment and joy in his face, says. He was a witness to the glorious ‘festival of bliss’ that was the 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday celebration of Bhagavan Baba on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of Nov, 2005. “Whenever I recollect those blissful moments...”, another devotee with a great sense of elation and joy on his face says, “...Swami in the bright yellow robe seated on the swan-like grand silver throne... so majestic, so magnificent and so full of benevolence with a beatific countenance on the Birthday evening... the lotus-shaped impressive stage on the west from which soul stirring music by the who’s who of Indian music was filling my heart ...every artist weaving magic with the instruments and their voice, enlivening every cell of my being... And then, the laser show! I can never forget that. What a grand finale! The laser show just arrested me with its myriad patterns frisking and dancing in perfect synchronization to the scintillating digital music, accompanying this, were the fireworks! Sparkling beams of bright light on that pleasant star-studded night...bursting and brightening that beautiful night...an unforgettable play of light and sound... add to this, the cool breeze... and ultimately, and most importantly, all this excitement in the immediate divine presence of the Eternal Enigmatic Being, my most beloved Baba - the very light of my life. No one present there could remain untouched with the magic of the moment and I was no exception!” concludes a Sai devotee who had come for the occasion from Orissa, a state which is miles away from Puttaparthi.

Every devotee who was present in the Hill View Stadium on the Birthday evening can very easily relate to this. Truly, the 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday celebration was extraordinary. It was festivity at its best. Every devotee who had gathered for the occasion went home with memories to last a life time. Memories that drench every cell of their being with love and bliss whenever recalled.

It was to enjoy this moment with Sai on the 80<sup>th</sup> year of His earthly sojourn, to make the moment as special as possible, to make the long-awaited day as glorious as it could be that a sea of humanity had gathered. **Truly, it was a birthday by the devotees, for the devotees, and in its truest essence, of the devotees.** Truly the most precious day for every devotee is the day Swami entered his/her life and for each one of them the Lord’s Birthday is an event head and shoulders above their own birthday.

#### **Swami’s Only Concern...His Devotees**

Swami, pure selfless love that He is, if He were concerned about anything during the Birthday celebrations, it was about the devotees comforts and their well-being. Elderly devotees who were in close physical proximity of Bhagawan only know how Swami used to enquire everyday about the

arrangements made for the devotees concerning their food and stay - and least about what major functions were being planned for the Birthday celebrations, be it dances, concerts, or fireworks. **Whenever the elders who were chalking out elaborate plans and embarking on grand ideas to mark the day presented Swami with their plans, He would be quite uninterested, to say the least. To get His consent to make more shelters for the devotees would be far easier than to organize say, confetti being sprayed from a helicopter on the Birthday morning.**

### **‘Big Stars’ Came Because THEY Wanted To!**

If the big concert happened and leading musicians played, it was because they wanted to be part of the celebrations. It was a cannot-afford-to-lose opportunity for everyone. If the fireworks or the laser show glittered and lit up the night sky and provided a grand finale to the celebrations, it was because the organizing devotees had not only worked hard night and day for it but also prayed even harder that they be allowed to have the show. For, as already mentioned, with Swami to organize a mass marriage or mass feeding for the poor is easy, but never a cultural or entertainment extravaganza.

As ever, never an invitation was sent to anybody to come to Prashanti Nilayam. Devotees poured in hundreds and thousands from the 18<sup>th</sup> of November when the *Rathotsavam* (Chariot procession) was celebrated, as is done every year. The Ladies Day celebrations followed on the 19<sup>th</sup> Nov.

Responding to the prayers of more than 11000 delegates gathered for the 8<sup>th</sup> World Conference, Swami consented for the World Conference to be held for two days on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Nov. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> was the Convocation of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher learning with the Governor of Karnataka being the Chief Guest and finally the D-Day was on 23<sup>rd</sup> Nov.

A plethora of distinguished personalities – politicians, musicians, sports-persons, educationists, doctors, lawyers, you name it from every field – and a large motley multitude comprising of Sai devotees from more than 145 countries had converged to pay their homage to Baba - their beloved, their divine mother and father.

### **“An Exciting Family Function” - G Sai Prasad from Hyderabad**

As one Sai Youth from Hyderabad, G Sai Prasad, put it,

“One would think that celebrating 80<sup>th</sup> birthday at Prashanti would be very festive; perhaps it was so for lot of devotees. **For me, however, celebrating our lord’s 80<sup>th</sup> birthday was more like being part of an exciting family function, like a marriage of a brother or kid sister.**”

### **Experiencing The One Through the Many - Ricardo from Italy**

Another devotee, Ricardo from Italy, said,

“I’m proud to be here. The conference is very well organized. The people here are very well taken care of. In spite of the huge crowd everything is working nicely. **We are all mingling as a human family. We can experience the one through the many.**”

In fact, this was the feeling that many devotees echoed and the whole celebration transformed itself into a grand family function...a great family union. You could see the theme of the world conference – Unity, Purity and Divinity - in action. And Swami, the divine mother, played the role of a host to perfection to the thousands who had gathered to receive His love and benediction.

**Food was served free of cost to everyone from the 18<sup>th</sup> of Nov to 24<sup>th</sup>.** Everybody enjoyed being in Prashanthi those seven days and relished the food that was served as ‘*Prasadam*’, as one devotee, Keenan from Australia, said during the birthday week,

**“I Have Never Seen Anything Like This” – Kennan from Australia**

“I have only spent 7 months with Swami. I hope to spend more time and I have been blessed to be here for the birthday celebrations. Swami is just taking care of all. He is feeding thousands of people and not one is being left with an empty stomach. They don’t put a limit as to how much you can eat - you can eat as many times as much as you want, it’s incredible, I have never seen anything like it!”

Yes, incredible it was! **In the Birthday week at least hundred thousand breakfasts, lunches and dinners including snacks were served every day.** Every devotee looked at the arrangements made with awe and wonder.

**“Everything is conducted in an atmosphere of love and dedication” - Pradeep Kamath, from USA.**

Pradeep Kamath, another devotee from USA, said,

“I’ve attended the other birthday functions, the 70th, the 75th, and in each one of them you see a tremendous amount of love and dedication from the Sai devotees, especially in all the arrangements they make for the devotees. Everybody gets fed and there are almost a million people! There is never any violence or any other incident here! **Everything is conducted in an atmosphere of love and dedication and respect.**”

Many Keenans and Kamaths like this who had come from all over India and the world, while enjoying the elaborate arrangements made for the devotees, wondered - “How does this all happen?”

**How Was This Mammoth Undertaking Accomplished?**

How lakhs of people were assiduously fed everyday? How did the Ashram canteens and their staff cope with such tremendous pressure? How were tens

and thousands who landed in the small holy town accommodated? Who looked after Ashram security? Who looked after managing the tremendous crowd at every gate and every point of action? Who metamorphosed the Hill View Stadium from a cricket field to a big open air theatre? Who did the planning at the many levels and of course skillfully executed it all?

It is to provide clues to questions like this and to pay our tribute to thousands of Sai volunteers who worked tirelessly, anonymously and selflessly behind the scenes for weeks together, that we have this special cover story.

Many would not know that the planning for the Birthday celebrations began with the dawn of 2005 itself and it gained vital momentum during the Guru Poonima celebrations in July 2005. The All India President, Sri V Srinivasan, in right earnest, called a meeting of all the State Presidents of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations of India and formed the main Organizing Committee. Simultaneously various Sub-Committees were formed for various specific activities like the Food Committee, Accommodation Committee, Security Committee, Decoration, Sanitation, Health and Hygiene, etc.

### **‘Free Food For All’ – Bhagavan Baba**

The most crucial of all was, understandably, planning and organizing food for lakhs of devotees every single day for the whole Birthday week from the 18<sup>th</sup> of Nov to the 24<sup>th</sup>. It was a mammoth undertaking and every devotee who came for the birthday went home with pleasant memories of the variety of dishes that were rolled out in all the seven days – each day’s menu being special and different. But nobody knows how many selfless men and women with blue and orange scarves had worked towards this end, not for days and weeks but for months.

### **The First Meeting of The Food Committee**

In fact, the first meeting of the Food committee was organized by Sri S G Challam, the Service Wing Coordinator of Sathya Sai Seva Organisations, Andhra Pradesh, and a member of the Food Committee on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> of August 2005 in Guntur, a city in Andhra Pradesh as Andhra was assigned a major role in the food management. It was a conference of elders, active workers, experts, planners and thinkers where modalities of discharging the major responsibility of food was discussed in great detail. Data from previous world conferences were studied, a reasonable estimate of men and material was made and men of experience and expertise were identified for each activity. It was going to be a “*Anna Yagnam*” – a great sacrifice of offering food to thousands and the whole Sevadal cadre of the state was really gearing up for it.

### **The Second One Followed Soon...**

Soon this was followed with another conference again in Andhra Pradesh, but this time in the city of Rajahmundry. Now finer details of every activity were worked out and planning went to micro-level. Various sub-committees like

Manpower planning, Material procurement, Material Handling, Stores, Cooking, Kitchen Utensils, Kitchen Sanitation, Transportation, Distribution, Registration, etc. took shape and committed volunteers with experience were picked up to lead these committees. The role of every volunteer involved was clearly defined. The preliminary menu of the dishes was also made, estimates of the material required done and sourcing of all the materials, from utensils and vehicles to knives and brooms started immediately!

### **The Third Meeting With The All India President**

Come October and there was another meeting convened by the All India President (AIP) of all State Presidents and a detailed discussion of the developments made in every sphere of arrangement - from food and accommodation to decoration and security - was made. It was in this meeting that the AIP conveyed the news about the likely announcement of 'Free Food For All' by Bhagawan for the Birthday week. Soon estimates of different items required were done and the great feeling of togetherness with which all the states joined in to offer their mite is really overwhelming. To give you just a glimpse -

### **Each State Wants To Be A Part Of The Sacrifice...**

While Andhra Pradesh offered rice, oil, tamarind and spices, Tamil Nadu said it will take care of all the vegetable, sugar and tea requirements. Punjab joined in to offer a variety of pulses and wheat flour while cooking oil came from Gujarat. Similarly, Kerala offered jaggery and vermicelli and the state president of Madhya Pradesh said all beaten rice and some pulses would come from his state. All tea and coffee would come from Karnataka and Assam. Bihar and Himachal Pradesh would supplement the milk supplies. Like this, every state wanted to be a part of this sacred undertaking and every state supplemented the rest of the requirements and lent their helping hand in every manner possible. It was decided that by Nov 10<sup>th</sup> all the supplies would reach Prashanti Nilayam, and that's what precisely happened. The execution stage had begun after months of planning.

### **The Food Supply Network**

Now with the supplies in place, activity shifted to preparing the infrastructure in Puttaparthi.

- ◆ **Four kitchens were readied for the purpose** – The South Indian Canteen, the North Indian Canteen, The Andhra Kitchen behind the North 3 Block and the newly constructed make-shift Punjab Kitchen behind the North 5 Block.
- ◆ **Four main distribution points were identified inside the ashram with totally 80 food counters!** Two distribution points were meant for devotees and two were for delegates. For men devotees there were 25 counters and for women there were 27. For the delegates, there were 13 counters for gents and 15 for the ladies. Additionally, there were

separate counters for staff, police, Sevadal volunteers, press and the physically challenged devotees. Temporary sheds were erected with proper water facilities and barricades at appropriate places were raised for smooth flow of traffic.

- ◆ One main store and four sub-stores – one for each Kitchen – came up.
- ◆ Four tractors, six mini-trucks, two vans, a mechanized hydraulic trolley and two hydraulic fork lifts drove into Puttaparthi for distribution of food from the Kitchen to the various distribution points.
- ◆ The information and communication accessories like computer systems and wireless sets were organised.
- ◆ Water points were set up at various locations inside the ashram to quench the thirst of the teeming crowds. Similarly, to maintain cleanliness, there were garbage bins at suitable locations.

### **The Sevadal Volunteers Kept Coming....**

Now, who was doing all this? **By 16<sup>th</sup> of November, nearly 2,500 Sevadal volunteers from all parts of India, with a majority from Andhra Pradesh, had gathered and were in action. This number grew to 3,000 by 19<sup>th</sup> and on the Birthday there were nearly 4,500 volunteers** who had literally taken charge of every aspect of the Birthday celebration. They were ubiquitous in the Ashram and their dedication to selfless service was contagious.

A large number, nearly 60% of them were from the home state of Andhra Pradesh. Another 20% came from the neighboring state of Orissa, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The rest were from the far away states of Haryana, Delhi, Punjab and the like in the north, Sikkim and West Bengal in the East, Kerala in the South and Gujarat in the West. More than 40% of this workforce were in their thirties and they were ably supported by another 40% who were middle-aged.

Every activity from major to the minor was carefully thought through and executed. For example, once the menu for the seven days was finalized, the cooking of various items was beautifully shared among all the four canteens depending on their strengths and skills.

### **What Sumptuous Menus!**

During the Birthday week, the typical menu for the day included *idli* and *upma* or *pongol* with chutney for breakfast; *puri* or *chapathi*, flavoured rice, vegetable curry, curd rice, pickles and a sweet dish for the meal sessions, and *pakor*s, *vada*s, etc. to go with tea and coffee during snack hours.

While breakfast items and flavoured rice were prepared at the Andhra Kitchen, the Punjabi kitchen took charge of preparing the *chapathis* and *puris* and the appropriate side dishes such as peas curry, *paneer* curry, etc.

Curd rice, coffee and tea were the domain of the South Indian canteen while the kitchen attached to the North Indian canteen supplied the snacks and sweets for the afternoon tea. So, it was a great collaborative effort making optimum use of all the resources – men, material and expertise - available.

The food arrangement being the most challenging operation had more than 30% of the volunteers working on its various aspects. To this workforce joined another 400 young enthusiasts – The Hyderabad Sai Youth Group. “The dedication and commitment of all these volunteers is to be seen to be believed,” a senior member of the Sai family said.

### **Continuous Cooking - No One Went Hungry**

**In the course of one week, more than 6 lakh devotees partook of the Prasadham Bhagavan had so graciously blessed them with. It was Bhagavan’s command that no one who came to Prasanthi Nilayam should go hungry** and so there were days when food continued to be plied to the counters long after the regular hours. Indeed, on November 23<sup>rd</sup>, the lunch session that commenced at 10.30 a.m. continued till tea-time at 4 p.m. and the tea session spilled over to the dining session which concluded only after 9.30 p.m. Thus, on that day, **the kitchen fires never stopped blazing and the volunteers were on their feet all day distributing and serving the food at the counters!**

And were all the distribution points only inside the ashram? No. Apart from the four distribution points inside the Ashram, food had to be transported to the Primary school, the Higher Secondary School Hostel, the Senior Boys Hostel, the Bangalore students Hostel, the Anantapur girls Hostel, the Staff quarters and even to the railway station! All the arriving devotees were served first with Bhagavan’s *Prasadham* as soon as they alighted from their train. Recalling his experience at the railway station, a British devotee, Mark says,

### **“One of the Best Days of My Life” – Mark from UK**

“I smiled out of joy as I looked upon the station forecourt. On the left were many tents under which full meals of *prasadham* (rice and sweets) were being served to the just arrived railway passengers in perfect discipline. This was such a caring gesture which seemed to assure the devotees that the rest of the facilities would be of the same thoughtful nature. There were a host of Sevadals on duty and the blue and white scarves gave me a feeling of being welcomed home.

The 80th Birthday fervour was sparkling in the air. It was the 21st November, and the overcrowded station bore testament to the lakhs who were converging to celebrate the biggest birthday party on the planet! Such a huge number of people required a similarly matched amount of shepherding, guidance and practical help. And this was evident on leaving the station steps.

A fleet of shiny new blue and white buses were arrayed to take us to the ashram just in front of the station. I stepped into one and was immediately welcomed by the other passengers. **We were all Sai pilgrims going to see our Master and the shared excitement was palpable.** The journey was short and then we were left to merge with the sea of humanity who were blessed enough to seek His Grace and join in the Party at Puttaparthi – one of the best days of my life!”

That was not all, there was a distribution point in the Puttaparthi village too! There was a counter set up at Sri Pedda Venkama Raju Kalyana Mantapam, so that devotees staying outside would not be put to the inconvenience of having to stand in long queues inside the ashram.

### **Incredible Effort from the Sevadals**

Undoubtedly, it was not easy managing the timely distribution of food at every point. The first step was, of course, cooking. **There was non-stop cooking which went on for 16-18 hours everyday in every kitchen.** It was just spontaneous outpouring of love of thousands of men and women who volunteered, unasked, to lend their mite to this mighty and holy endeavour. These volunteers, who came from different parts of the country, the young and the old, hailing from various walks of life, selflessly toiled for a fortnight, setting aside thoughts of their own comforts and convenience doing all sorts of activities in the kitchen – cleaning and cutting vegetables, washing vessels, shifting bags of rice and other items from the stores to the kitchens – and then moving the cooked food to the various counters and actually serving at the food counters. Their motto – **‘Cook With Love, Serve With Love.’**

And that’s what they exactly did. Just to give you an idea of the staggering scale of activity that was involved –

**In the seven days of cooking, more than 170 tons (170,317 kgs) of food material were cooked. Rice alone, of this, constituted 45 tons.** Chapatis and puris were made out of 14 tons of wheat flour. 18 tons of oil was consumed and 13 tons of sugar went into the sweets and other preparations. And then, 50,000 litres of milk were used for various preparations apart from tea, coffee, etc. while 31 tons of vegetables were cooked and 12 tons of pickle was served.

### **“They Were Truly the Unsung Heroes” – A Central Trust Official**

All this happened silently. Selflessly. **The whole exercise was like a great sacrifice and all the sevadals offered themselves completely - body, mind and soul** – to see to it that every devotee who landed in Puttaparthi was fed properly. “They were truly the unsung heroes”, recalls a Central Trust official who was present at the scene of action during those days,

“They were not superhumans, but with the unlimited strength and endurance they derived from Bhagavan, all the fatigue and stress were forgotten. They braved the weather that suddenly turned inclement, never allowing their

enthusiasm to flag or the work to be disrupted. They would cheerfully go about their work, singing Bhajans full throated, thus motivating each other and also charging the atmosphere with such divine vibrations of the sacred Name of the Lord.”

Recalling a moving anecdote which really summarized the whole ambience of the work place in the kitchen, another Central Trust official says,

#### **“Theirs was a Labour of Love” – Another Central Trust Official**

**“In the Punjab Canteen, as the volunteers rolled out the *chapathis* in thousands, a young man gifted with a melodious voice kept their spirits up by singing Bhajans without break for up to eight hours! Can you imagine that! Theirs was a labour of love... a tale of great sacrifice. They wanted no reward, no recognition, no appreciation. The work itself was the reward. Most of them, you won’t believe it, denied themselves the bliss of having Bhagavan’s Darshan or witnessing the grand celebrations at the Sri Sathya Sai Hill View stadium, though they had come from states thousands of miles away. Their focus and dedication was complete, to say the least. Yes, they did not see Bhagavan, nay physically, because they saw Bhagavan in their work, every moment. They did not miss Bhagavan on that auspicious day too for their hearts and minds were with Bhagavan, always.”**

#### **Distribution of Food - Andhra Pradesh Sai Youth Come Here**

After the cooking, the next major task was to ensure that the food cooked reaches the distribution points in time from the different canteens. This is the area where the Andhra Pradesh Sai Youth did a splendid job, as ever. They have been handling such work whenever there is a big event in Prashanthi Nilayam and during the 80<sup>th</sup> birthday they again amazed everybody with their energy, expertise and meticulous planning.

You could see that they were putting their corporate experience to full use by the way they went about doing their task – days ahead of the birthday week they were identifying and numbering the different routes to the distribution points, stocking adequate number of vessels required for every route, estimating the vehicles and number of trips required for each route, clearly marking ‘From’ and ‘To’ destinations with the Vehicle in-charge’s name and Mobile no. on the windshield of each of the 9 LCV’s and two pick up autos, constituting separate loading and unloading teams for each vehicle, positioning multi-lingual experienced youth in each of the four canteens to bring about perfect coordination with the distribution points as well kitchen in charges and of course, picking the right persons for the right jobs.

Did they fully succeed in utilising their corporate experience? K S Ravi Kiran, a Project Manager at GE in Hyderabad, who coordinated the activities in the Punjab Canteen says,

**“The Only Awareness There Was...We Are Here For Bhagawan” - K S Ravi Kiran**

“I was part of the Youth group from Hyderabad and was thrilled to take up the responsibility of food distribution to the Schools, Colleges, Railway station and the multiple Canteens for devotees. With an International MBA degree I was ready to take the task head-on using my Project and People Management skills, only to fall flat and realize on the first morning itself that the task was beyond the capabilities of a single human being or even a group for that matter. It needed united human intervention at the physical level and abundant Divine Grace for all the activities to come together and fall in place. And they did, very magically!!

People from different parts of the country met and instantly/naturally became aware of the Universal Brotherhood (and Sisterhood!). With the mornings starting at around 3 am, after an almost oblivious 2 hour nap, and continuing until mid-night there was no time to think about the "differences", the body and the clothes. The only awareness was of the fact that we were all there for our beloved Bhagavan and we had a role to play in the historic event.

**At home where we seek help to lift a gas cylinder or for that matter the study chair, here the potential multiplied multifold. A heavy vessel needed not more than 5 Sai Children, Sai's name did the magic.”**

The youth not only transported food items, they were engaged in other activities in the kitchen too like the cleaning the vessels, kitchen sanitation, etc. And like Ravi Kiran many youth realised that they were doing things that they had never imagined themselves capable of doing!

### **G Sai Prasad Coordinator in the Andhra Kitchen.**

Recalling an experience on the same lines, G Sai Prasad, a Country Manager at Nokia Research Division, India, who coordinated activities in the Andhra Kitchen says,

#### **“No Hard Work...Just Divine Thrill of Seva” – G Sai Prasad**

“During the activity I could see myself doing things that I otherwise would not push myself into – getting up at 3 in the morning, or lifting super heavy vessels, etc. Often I was compelled to take a leadership stand and manage the team as if I was in some sort of warehouse doing just-in-time material management. All in all, with the encouragement of other Sevadal, elders and undeniably Swami's grace, the activity floated to completion just as easily as it got ramped up. That is, the end of the Seva was just as graceful and unclimactic as the beginning. As such was the case, I am left to wonder if WE really did anything in the food transport, or, was there some other unseen hand??

I am a conventional fellow. I can't venture a guess about some magical stuff influencing our deliveries in some unseen subtle ways. I can only say that while doing our Seva duty, we thought we were doing some 'hard work', but

really we never were stressed or strained, instead, we walked away with the gift of thrill in our hearts. Sometimes this feeling was so abundant that **we expressed ourselves freely on the tractor routes with some fast and furious bhajans and shouts of “Sathya Sai Babaji Ki Jai”**. On the day of the birthday, some of us spontaneously wrote love letters to Bhagavan on our white T shirts. That is, it was not uncommon to see lot of us with pink and blue crayon scribble of “Happy Birthday to our most beloved Bhagavan” on our dirtied white T-shirts. Loud bhajans on delivery routes, shouts of “Jai” to Bhagavan on loading docks, painted T-shirts... now does that sound like hard work? No. To me it sounds like a family function where the kith and kin were enjoying the occasion. And, that is exactly how I would characterize our Beloved’s 80th birthday service activity.”

Yes, for the youth it was a great family union...a grand get-together to celebrate the birthday of their divine mother, the mother who is most precious than all the wealth of the world. And they did everything that is possible, the hard work and the unearthly working hours was never a pain, it was a blessing on the contrary.

Sai Prasad again going down the memory lane with great joy recalls,

“Throughout the duty we were surprisingly unmindful of the birthday Darshan or bhajan activities. Our world was food and its timely distribution to the devotees. Despite enduring some of the so-called “hardships” – which, by the way, never appeared to us as such – and, despite not having a chance to even glimpse Bhagavan even for a moment during those famous birthday days, we never felt saddened or felt deprived of anything.

The thrill of Seva, the excitement in the air, the rush of work was so palpable and enveloping us that we rarely missed the other stuff. It was as if the joy that all the other devotees had enjoyed was somehow packed in Seva and delivered to us in disguise as “the rush” from doing a good activity.”

### **Miracles Happened! – Ravi Kiran**

Yes, it was hard work. It was thrill... not without challenges. With unclear skies and so many other uncertainties, it called for tremendous presence of mind and faith in the Divine. Recalling one of those pressure-filled moments, Ravi Kiran says,

“It rained the day before the Birthday and the *Roti* making facility got flooded in the Punjabi Canteen. With fewer hands to make the *Puris* we were really short of the 60,000 target-number for that evening. All the Seva Dal started reciting Sai Gayatri and the hands which did the task of lifting those huge vessels with equal ease started rolling the dough. Miraculously in less than 90 minutes we were able to cope up with the lost time because of rain and were bang on target. Later helped poured in from unexpected quarters and the whole operation was a success.”

Just to get a glimpse of the sense of dedication that these youth had for their beloved lord, (which really made miracles happen) listen to what Ravi Kiran has to say -

### **Pushing Through the Pain... A Great Learning Experience.**

“I cannot help but mention the incident with one of the younger Sai Brothers. With rain water all over the canteen floor his feet soaked for a long time to the extent that they turned white in color and wrinkled. He was busy delivering food in-time to all the canteens, collecting the empty vessels. **I met him at around 11:30 pm when all the work was done. He was sitting alone on the steps that led to the canteen and was visibly in terrible pain which he realized only after he had fulfilled his duties for that day. He was in that state since morning, but the "movement" did not stop. The sense of duty overpowered his temporary pain and his senses were pushed to do the tasks that they wouldn't have done on any other day.** It was a great learning experience to work amongst such simple yet great souls.”

### **“Was There A Divine Hand At Work?” - Gangadhar Sarma.**

A great learning experience...an eye-opener in fact! As Gangadhar Sarma, a project Leader in Wipro, who coordinated the transport activities at the South Indian Canteen, says,

“Though there was a tremendous pressure during the seven day period of free food distribution, the entire team worked in such a manner that the pressure was not felt... during the activity the team could do things that otherwise would not be possible... Bhagavan gave us the strength and energy to do the activity without much stress and pressure. At the end of the Seva, there was a feeling in the team that did we really pull this off or was there a divine hand at work?”

### **“The Best Part of The Seva Was the Bhajans” - Gopi Krishna.**

The ‘Unseen Hand’ of Swami is an experience and a revelation that every Sai youth can vouch for. As Gopi Krishna, a management expert and a senior member of the Hyderabad Youth Group, says,

“The operations were definitely tough, more so with the large number of devotees present inside the ashram, moving up and down for Darshan and the other programmes BUT the entire operations went off flawlessly without any problem, accident or wastage.... There was a tremendous feeling of togetherness and Love within the team. **Though there was tremendous pressure during the seven day period of free food distribution, the youth took it in the most pleasing manner with Sai's Name on their lips and it taught each one of us what Unity can bring.**

**The best part of the Seva was the bhajans our teams were singing while transporting food. That gave us the strength.** It was a great team work with abundant blessings from the Universal Team leader – our beloved Mother

**Sai.** Each and every one of the team members felt the divine presence of Swami within him, around him and behind him protecting him as the eyelids protect the eye.”

A sterling example of what selfless service and sacrifice can do. A great reminder of that immortal declaration that Lord Krishna gave to Arjuna thousands of years ago in the battlefield –

“Ananya Schintayantomaa Ye Janah Paryupasathe  
Thesham Nithyabhiyouktanam, Yoga Kshemam Vahamyaham.”

Meaning...

Whoever is constantly engaged in thoughts of Me,  
I shall take care and look after his welfare in all respects.

### **“We Could Feel Swami’s All-Pervasiveness” - Sri Challam, Andhra Pradesh Sevalal Coordinator**

Sri Challam, the Andhra Pradesh Service wing coordinator, recalls the hectic says during the birthday and says, “We could feel Swami’s all-pervasiveness in every moment. There were many tense moments and in every such situation, Swami gave us relief and eased out our position.”

It was the Sevalals’ total dedication to the cause that drew divine grace and made the whole operation a success. Many would not know that there was even a feedback committee of 8 experienced Sevalal volunteers. These Sai workers discreetly and casually conducted opinion surveys about food quality and quantity from devotees everyday. Every day a sample of 50 enquiries were done at every point which meant 200 responses per session. All these inputs were carefully studied and put to good use so that devotees would have no problems as far as food is concerned. These volunteers also assessed the flow of devotees and helped in making accurate kitchen estimates which was no mean task in planning and forecasting.

### **“You Have All Done Well” - Swami**

The fulfillment of the whole exercise was when Swami Himself on the 25<sup>th</sup> of November blessed the food committee members by expressing His Ananda, His great satisfaction and happiness on the preparations done and even mentioned how all the devotees ate with satisfaction. That was not all! **The most merciful Lord again on the 1<sup>st</sup> December blessed the Sevalals saying “You have all done well.” Not once, but three times!** There is nothing more that every Sevalal could aspire for. Their mission was achieved, their sacrifice had found fulfillment and their work truly had transformed into worship.

“This appreciation”, Sri Challam, the Sevalal coordinator says, “of our most beloved Lord goes to all the Sevalal, Group Leaders, District Batch In-charges, State In-charges, District Sevalal coordinators and District Presidents who have motivated and conducted training classes for the

Sevadals in the past one year and of course to the thousands of Sevadals who worked day in and out in a great spirit of dedication and sacrifice.”

Well, food was only one of the major arrangements surrounding the 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday celebrations. There were many others – accommodation, security, sanitation, crowd control, decoration, maintenance, etc and every one of these activities were done by Sevalal.

### **The Moving Devotion of Mahabubnagar Sevadals**

One could see the youth of Mahabubnagar going around the ashram with water cans on their back distributing drinking water to the thirsty. This was their way of offering their gratitude to Swami, who had provided them with drinking water in the year 2001 through the Sri Sathya Sai Drinking Water Project.

Another very moving scene was to see the Mahaboobnagar Sevadals utilising trolleys in service. They would rush to the aid of devotees, especially elderly people, who needed help to transport their luggage to their place of accommodation in the ashram. The luggage was placed in trolleys which were wheeled by the youth themselves. What a thoughtful and heartwarming gesture! Nobody had asked them to do it. Some of them were senior executives in reputed companies but this job of a ‘porter’ was not menial for them. You cannot help but be moved with their dedication and devotion to their beloved lord.

### **“More Than 30,000 Entered Through the Ganesh Gate” - Sri Veera Reddy**

Similarly, hundreds of Sevadals were busy controlling crowd at crucial junctions of the Ashram. Sri Veera Reddy who was managing the crowd at the Ganesh gate says,

“Generally after *Darshan* and *bhajan* the devotees will go out from the Mandir, but from 15th to 30th Nov, in addition to the devotees already within the Mandir double the number of devotees entered in the Mandir for availing the free food facility offered by the Bhagavan. Daily more than 30,000 people entered through Ganesh Gate in addition to the devotees already in Mandir for availing the morning breakfast, mid-day lunch, evening snacks and tea and also evening dinner. Purely because of divine blessings of Bhagavan, we were able to manage the crowd without causing any inconvenience to the devotees.”

### **Accommodation for the Thousands**

Now, coming to the other principal task – providing accommodation to the hundreds that landed everyday. No effort was spared by the ashram authorities to ensure that none would have to be turned away at the gates of Prasanthi Nilayam and everything that was possible was done with the help of enthusiastic volunteers.

In addition to the dormitories that are usually available, more than 25 large shelters were put up to accommodate the hordes who were pouring in by the day. And work on these shelters started months ahead of the birthday.

There were separate accommodation arrangements made for the nearly 12,000 delegates who had gathered for the world conference. Every inch of Ashram space was utilized judiciously and a lot of planning went into allotting shelters for every state of India and every region of the world. You could see big boards on the temporary shelters saying –“Maharashtra”, “West Bengal”, etc.

Some devotees were even lodged in the Deena Janodharana Pathakamu complex – the orphanage near the ashram. There were free medical camps running and **doctors were available round the clock for consultation and treatment near the large shelters.** It was a great sight to see people from different regions and speaking different languages living and moving with each other so cordially and comfortably. In the Sai family, there is no stranger. “Sai Ram” is enough introduction and “Sai” is the common bond.

### **The 8<sup>th</sup> World Conference**

The two-day World Conference which had 8,000 delegates from India and more than 3,500 delegates from overseas was a sight to behold. It was a motley crowd of different cultures and regions, languages and beliefs but there was an underlying feeling of great brotherliness. All were just like children of one God, come to be with their dear father and they took back with them some of life’s most precious moments. To give you some glimpses –

#### **“We’re So Blessed To Be Here” - Clive Gregory from Canada.**

“It’s so awesome, so wonderful and so beautiful to see Baba every day. I have had friends who have had their knees healed and operations cancelled because Baba healed them. For myself, Baba is working on me. It’s a work in progress. I see so many people who come from all parts of the world. I was very blessed last year because I was chosen to lead the western devotees for Christmas and we had 50 people on a team that were from 35 different countries. It was awesome and you got to hear so many stories of people’s experiences with Baba - of how He would come in their dreams, of how they would be motivated to serve Baba in their countries and here.

Having read all of the Sathya Sai Speaks books, all of the Vahini books and all of Kasturi’s books, it’s overwhelming and I am in awe to be in God’s presence every day. I say it humbly from my heart because **I sat yesterday when Swami came out from the veranda, I started to cry because I felt so much bliss.** And we are all so blessed to be here, and I know Swami sits there and He enjoys all of our love for Him as well, because thousands have come here from all parts of the world to be here for Swami’s 80th birthday. And we’re so blessed to be here now.

Today I was helping the overseas and Indian delegates that have come for the conference to find their seating. Everyone is so happy. How can you be somewhere where there is so much love? I've been in baseball stadiums, in Olympic stadiums, everywhere for different events, but this place is special. **I know that Baba's wish of *Dharma*, world wide peace and love everywhere will come true, because if He can find a place in my heart He can find a place in everybody's heart. We all love Baba and I love everybody."**

This is the real miracle. The way Swami enters each individual's heart and then slowly, silently but surely brings out a U-turn in the individual's outlook. Many years pass and the individual cannot believe the amazing changes that have come about in his attitude towards life and society. **And all this happens without Swami speaking a word to the devotee physically even once.** His presence is enough. His power is there everywhere.

**"I Am Doing the Same Thing...But With A different Consciousness Now"  
- Ricardo from Italy**

Ricardo, who was there for the World Conference from Italy, expressed exactly the same sentiments when he said,

"I met Swami for the first time in 1991. I then came to Whitefield in 1993. Since then my life has completely changed. My life now is full of joy. I never felt myself alone ever since I saw Swami for the first time in the physical form. And now everywhere I go I see a friend walking beside me, with whom I exchange all of my thoughts, needs, fears, joys - everything!

I am proud to be in the Sai Organization and I am doing Seva. All of my life has been reenergized by this meeting I had with Swami. I am doing more or less the same thing I was doing before, but with a different consciousness, with a different way of looking at others. I really hope that with Swami's grace the world will be a much better place than what it is now.

Apart from that my whole attitude towards life has changed. Whatever I'm doing now is kind of a Seva for others, including parents, friends, and everyone. I'm proud to be here."

The theme of the conference was Unity-Purity-Divinity and you could really see how there was this tremendous feeling of brotherliness. It was a practical demonstration of the power of collective positive thought which can do miracles.

**"To Be Here Is So Special" - Hector Casteneda from El Salvador**

Moved by the love and unity so evident during the conference, Hector Casteneda, Central Coordinator for Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean, mentioned the following to Heart2Heart,

“Well, we are here for Baba’s birthday and to come here at such an auspicious time is something you have to experience. There are so many people here that have come from more than 170 countries. And I was impressed to see members of so many religions who have converged here - that is something I have seen for the first time and you have to just experience it.

You have to feel the love of the people that come to see Swami. I know that it is very difficult for someone to stay here at this time because there are so many people; but the love that He spreads and the love that all the devotees spread all over makes you feel very comfortable. To be at this special place on the Avatar’s 80th birthday is something special, because we know that something better is in store for this planet. Then, **Swami’s love for all people is going to spread all over the planet and we are going to live in peace.** This is something which He has been telling us for years and it is going to happen.”

Their conviction about Swami and His message is exemplary and contagious. Each devotee has the golden book of his priceless experiences with Bhagavan in their and that gives all the inspiration and strength that each one needs whenever and wherever.

#### **“The Care and Attention To All Was Wonderful” - Dr. Nelly Carache from Venezuela**

Dr. Nelly Carache, a devotee from the South American country of Venezuela, said, “It’s my 6th trip here and I have known Baba for eighteen years. I am a doctor and I have had a lot of experiences there with Swami. Here, for this celebration, for the magnitude of this 80th Swami’s birthday, **I just can say that the attention, and care to all the devotees was lovely, wonderful. I feel that there was a holy hand, a divine hand - if not, it would be impossible for everything to be so perfect.**

Talking about my experiences, my husband (who does not believe in miracles) was cooking in our kitchen, when suddenly he cut his thumb badly. I told to him to just put *Vibhuti* with a bandage. We waited twelve hours to check it and then found that there was not even a mark. His hand was perfect again.”

In whichever corner of the world he/she may be, each devotee feels Swami’s love. And seeing Swami physically during the grand Birthday celebrations was an experience that was phenomenal. Some devotees from distant countries, who were there in Prashanti just a few months ago during the Guru Poonima celebrations in July, could not allow themselves to miss the big event. The magic of His love and the gift of His Darshan pulled them and they were again back at the Lotus Feet of their beloved!

#### **“We Are So Pleased To See Swami Again” - Steven Perry from UK**

One such example is Steven Perry from UK who said, “We were here at Guru Poornima, and we felt so full that we weren’t going to come back. But we came back for the 8th World Conference and to see Swami again! And we are just so pleased to see Swami so full of love for everyone. I’ve known Swami since 1998, and since then I try to follow His teachings.

And although I am imperfect, I feel some movement is happening within me. It’s such a pleasure to see everybody here from every corner of the world. It is just such a big birthday celebration. **We all love Swami and we have all got to learn to give that love to other people as well.**”

### **“The Best Miracle For Me Is To See Swami Move All Hearts” - Juan Carlos Ponce de Leon from Peru**

Juan Carlos Ponce de Leon from Peru who was here in Prashanti Nilayam during the Birthday told Heart2Heart,

“It’s incredible for me to feel the love and the energy of Swami as His presence - and in each devotee too. **The best miracle for me is to see Swami move all hearts, to share love and work together. This is the real transformation.** I have heard stories about the *leelas* of Swami, but the most important thing is the change of mind and heart of people. And then to spread Swami’s words to the people in more than 140 countries.”

This was the inspiration with which the thousands who had gathered for the World Conference left – to share Swami’s love and His message. Their hearts were recharged and full with the experience of His presence and they wanted to share with anybody they could. And in fact, that is what life is meant for – to share love, to be caring, to realise that there is God in every being. When every man realises and practises this fundamental unity in creation, each one can see and feel divinity in every moment. The golden age truly then would have arrived.

### **The Wonderful Sai Symphony Orchestra**

A beautiful event associated with the World Conference was the Sai Symphony Orchestra on the 21<sup>st</sup> evening where 53 musicians from over 20 countries performed before Bhagavan. There were artists from Asia, Australia, Europe, North, Central and South America and they worked together during five days of rehearsals in a great joyful spirit of unity and love. Their goal was simple – to do their best before their Sweet Lord. Now, we are not going into details of the beautiful compositions they played. You must have read all this in the Prashanti Diary of the December issue. (To read it again, go here.) What we are going to give you is glimpses of the spirit behind their performances - what inspired them to come to Puttaparthi? How did they know about Swami? And what music means to them?

### **“Swami Has Blessed Me” - Klaus Maurer, Conductor**

When Heart2Heart asked the conductor Klaus Maurer his experiences, he told us -

“When I came first to Prashanti it was because one of my friends talked about Swami, but actually Swami entered into my life much earlier. Swami is omnipresent. **He has created the whole world, He has created me, so there are so many times in my life Swami has blessed me.** He gave me my wife. I asked Him to give me a wife who would be able to live around the world and He gave me Johanna, who is a marvelous pianist from Poland. Then we came to Puttaparthi, my wife had a chance to play a piano recital for Swami. And after this, Swami gave me the opportunity to conduct this orchestra. How can I thank Swami for all that He does, because it is a present for me. I conduct the orchestra and I learn so much from Him. Everyday you try to improve, to make better music - you try to seek perfection. You are not perfect, you never achieve perfection - only God is perfection - but every day has a goal with Swami.”

#### **“This is the Best Moment Of My Career” - Andrea from Croatia**

“My first impression of playing for the Sathya Sai Symphony Orchestra was a year and a half ago, when I was here in Puttaparthi, and Swami called me for interview,” says Andrea, a professional musician who plays bass trombone, from Croatia who was also part of the Orchestra. He continues, “In the interview He asked me what my profession is. I told Him that I am a musician and that I play trombone in the symphony orchestra. Then we talked about my profession and I started to have a wish to play in front of Swami. I didn’t know that there is an international Sathya Sai Symphony Orchestra.

I was also here, 3 months ago. I met some people from the organization and they asked me if I would like to play for Swami - I didn’t have to think very long! **I think this is the best moment of my career - to play in front of my God** in this symphony orchestra. The atmosphere in this orchestra is very good and very positive. We all come from various corners of the world; we just met each other and started playing. So simple and so complicated at the same time.

Music is equal to divinity according to me. **I don’t know what can be more blissful and more divine, because there is nothing in this world that is more divine than music for me.** I am a musician and I can tell you that out of my experience. And when you come to Prashanti Nilayam, when you hear bhajans, when you hear chanting of the Vedas, when you hear classical music, you will always find the same vibration; you will always find the same divine fire in all the music. Although they are various kinds of music, the divine fire will be the same.”

How true! Andrea so beautifully spelt out the soul of music.

#### **“It’s Just Great To Be Here” - Letora from France**

For some of the musicians it was their first visit to Swami like Letora from France.

“It’s my first time here, and I’m very surprised that there are so many people who have come to be with Swami,” says Letora who plays bassoon, a wind instrument, and landed in Puttaparthi just a week before the orchestra. “I am very impressed,” he continues, “that we have offered this music to Swami. I love to play music because I think that rhythm has something to do with spirituality. For me, this is the most important thing I have to offer to Swami.... A lot of people are doing a lot of work here. It’s wonderful. The village and landscape of Puttaparthi is very beautiful. The weather is good. It’s just great to be here.”

### **“What Swami Said About Love Really Moved Me” – Concert Member from Japan**

Another first-timer, from Japan, says, “I joined the concert for the first time. I met Sai Baba this year through my mother-in-law. So this year everything for me is new and I’m really excited. I’m very happy to play the music with this orchestra because everybody is nice and they are helping so much when I can’t understand what to do. I’m happy to do for Baba anything concerned with music. Music is my job. I had a really special time at His birthday. I’m very excited now. And what Swami said about love really moved me. Such kind of words I never heard. I’m trying to understand more of Him and the Sai community.”

### **“I Like Music With Love” - Harry from Holland**

Harry, another member of the Sai Symphony Orchestra, says,

“I like music so much, not only classical western but I like all types of music which is played with love. When there is no love, I don’t like it. When there is love, I like it. And this is how Swami wants us to be - full of love. When we go back to our countries, we are there to represent Swami’s love. So we come together and play to the physical form, but when we go back we carry the memories.”

Yes, all the 53 musicians carried back with them memories...memories so sweet that will fill them with bliss whenever recalled, memories that will inspire them forever to divinize not only their music and but also every moment of their life.

After the World Conference, we know, there was the Institute’s convocation and then the action shifted to the Hill View Stadium for the big day!

### **The Stunning Stadium on The Birthday**

Not many people know of the elaborate planning and arrangements that were being made in the stadium weeks before the B Day. More than 150 Sevadal

volunteers were engaged in various activities in stadium for more than a week before the Birthday.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup>, there was even a rehearsal of the Sevadal deployment and the whole stadium was divided into seven sectors – three on the ground and the other four in the galleries. A student, who used to watch the developments in the stadium from behind the hostel in its preparatory days, says,

“The stadium seemed to have woken up from its quite and sedentary ways. The statues in the stadium already wore a fresh coat of paint as if they were all dressed and ready for the grand event. A casual observer would have noticed a team of people busy inspecting the Shanthi Vedika stage and the surrounding galleries. In the days to come they transformed the stage and the stadium into something that resembled a massive royal court! Somebody said, nay, it’s a great comfy open air theatre!

With the green water-proof carpet all over the area of the ground, the stadium had acquired a totally new manifestation.”

### **A Complete Makeover to Shanthi Vedika**

Yes, the stadium was actually no more a stadium. In fact, many people who had never seen the stadium in its preparatory days were shocked to the ground on the final day - "My God! We cannot recognise this. Is it the same Hill View Stadium that had the cricket ground?" they asked with big eyes and open mouths.

“The Shanthi Vedika stage was getting a complete makeover. Beautiful cut-outs and decorations started adorning the stage. The floor had beautiful tiles now and professional florists from many regions including Japan and Switzerland were busy creating a masterpiece of beauty. And then the ornate lamp-posts along the road...at night fall they lit up like a necklace around the stadium!” says another student and continues, “another neat idea you could not help appreciate was the path that was being made through the center of the ground. Thanks to this red-carpeted centre path, on the Birthday, hundreds of devotees could catch a glimpse of Swami from a distance of only a few metres!”

### **The Impressive Hoardings...**

Huge hoardings came up around the stadium days prior to the 23<sup>rd</sup> conveying what Swami truly is - pure selflessness. "Your Well-being is my concern", "Your Joy is My Wish", the 40 ft by 20 ft structures stated along with beautiful images of Swami smiling and blessing. And mind you, they were permanent structures in wood and iron which had taken a week to erect. In addition to this, smaller banners with the 80th birthday logo filled the stadium and added so much colour to the setting. In fact, such huge hoardings were found not only in the stadium but inside the Ashram as well. Not only that, more than 30 such large hoardings were put up even in the city of Bangalore and many

more on the way to Puttaparthi from Bangalore. All conveying the immortal message of love and peace of Swami.

### **A New Stage Blossoming...**

“You could not miss the galleries below the Hanuman statue where a bright lotus like stage was blossoming!” another student currently doing his Ph. D says. “Carpenters, decorators and engineers were busy at work - Painting the flanks, putting up and testing the lights, setting up the elaborate sound system, carrying out tests and fine tuning the performance of each piece of equipment.”

Just beside this stage, there was another big structure coming up - the LED display screen. It was in fact, from one of world's best companies in the LED business - Barco, a company renowned for its longstanding leadership in the visualization industry. There were actually two screens, the second one placed above the pavilion on the gents' side. And these two displays were receiving their feed from eight video cameras set up at different strategic locations all round the stadium. There were even two aerial multi-dimensional 'speed dome' cameras on either side of the Shanthi Vedika. Thanks to this set up, all the devotees could totally involve themselves with the happenings on the stage and also watch close-ups of Swami sitting on the majestic throne in the Shanthi Vedika.

### **Explosions and Lasers!**

Everybody who was there in the stadium on that blissful evening can never forget the grand fireworks and of course the laser show. The fireworks specialists were from the famous Sivakasi and were people who had handled various other mega-events across the country. Thanks to their expertise and also divine grace, in spite of the intermittent rain they lit up the evening sky on the 23rd with one of the most spectacular fireworks displays that Parthi had ever witnessed - the rockets went up to 100ft into the sky and many lit up a diameter of 125 ft with sparkling colours. Coupled with the laser show, these two events really mesmerised the devotees with the delightful play of sound and light and made the evening so very memorable.

### **The World of Music Offers Their Devotion To Swami**

We know that very eminent musicians offered their music to Swami on that beautiful evening. Be it Pt. Shiv Kumar Sharma, Kavita Subramaniam and Dr. L Subramaniam, Amjad Ali Khan, Richa Sharma, Parveen Sultana or Dana Gillespie, for all of these musicians, the experience was priceless.

**Amaan, Ayaan, Amjad Ali Khan and Subhalakshmi Khan** after the performance said, “We feel so blessed to have been able to perform in the divine presence of Baba on His eightieth year. It was so moving to see lakhs of people sharing the music in complete devotion that evening in Puttaparthi, in spite of the constant drizzle.

**Ever since our entire family had Baba's Darshan and Blessings, we think of Swami constantly and feel blessed in every way every day of lives.** We just feel so fortunate to have been here to witness this great day and get Baba's blessings."

#### **"With Swami...We Are in Heaven" – Begum Parveen Sultana**

When we spoke to **Begum Parveen Sultana and Ustad Dilshad Khan** after their concert on the 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday evening, recalling their first performance in front of Swami, Parveenji said,

"Believe it or not, for two minutes we could not sing with the emotion choked in my voice. Bhagavan was sitting before us, I can't believe it - we had heard about Him and that day... was it true that we were going to sing for Him? I was pinching myself... where was I, was I really sitting in front of Him? It was an unbelievable experience. And from that day onwards we became His devotees....

Whenever we come here and sing before Swami, I have very good experiences. Whenever I am with Swami and suppose somebody is playing or singing, **Swami just looks at me or I just look at Swami and we just communicate like that** - how the concert is going on, how nice it is, how divine it is - it is like a mental conversation, like father and daughter. There are so many things you learn.

Baba has taught us many things and whenever I sing, you know, Baba is sitting there. I feel some more life to our music, some sort of energy and vibration and I feel so much at peace and I become a different person. I go to a different world with Swami's appreciation and Swami's power. **He charges me with energy. It is so divine that I don't care for the world.** I look at Swami and Swami looks at me and it is something like a booster rocket - that kind of energy I get. Whenever I come here and sing, the satisfaction that I get, I don't get anywhere else because this is divine satisfaction. We are all professional musicians; we work hard and earn money. We sing for the gallery, we sing for the masses, we sing for class - but here we sing specially for God; we imbibe the divine atmosphere. We feel as if we are singing in a Durbar, *Swarg*, and Heaven. God is sitting before us."

#### **"All Our Life Is Devoted to Him" - Ustad Dilshad Khan**

With a great sense of humility, Ustad Dilshad Khan adds,

"Sometimes we feel that what we got from Him, a child won't get from his parents - the way we got so many things from Baba. **We will definitely serve and obey the orders of Sai; all our life is devoted to Him.** Not only this life but for all lives to come we will be devoted to Him and we will do whatever He says."

#### **"I Think of Him In Every Step" - Dana Gillespie**

We have read what Begum Praveen and Amjad Ali Khan had to say. Now let's move from the heart of Indian classical music to the soul of western contemporary music. This is how Dana Gillespie, a well-known international blues singer, described her experience performing before Swami to H2H -

"I have sung beside Him when He sat on the side of the stage with me. That is a strange dichotomy for as a performer you are meant to be performing for the audience out there, but at the same time there is this Presence. So you sing for the audience but occasionally I will give a little glance to Him but would not sing straight to Him. A lot of people have said it must be so emotional when He is sitting there. But in fact it is not; it is as if on the day of the concert He switches off my emotions because if I was emotional at that point I would be overcome with bliss and choked with emotion. I do the job, I feel the joy but I focus on the job. **But if I am on my own during a rehearsal I am often in tears of joy and sometimes it is as if it is not my voice and I can cry over the lyrics.**"

And how has Swami influenced her music and her life? Dana continues,

"I try to bring His teachings into the blues lyrics and I am proud that I have even just heard of Him because I spent up 23 years thinking that all the holy saints lived in the old days. **He has shown that His omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence is so overpowering that I think of Him at every step. And sometimes it is harder here with the physical form as He may not be talking to you - so forget the interview, it is the 'inner view' that counts!**"

### **SAI – To See Always Inside**

How true and revealing...yes, numerous are the occasions when Swami has mentioned that man has reached the moon and the depths of the ocean but not an inch within himself! In fact, all His interviews are to persuade us to see inside. SAI means to See Always Inside and millions derive inspiration from Him from within. His 5'3" physical frame is just an easy and sweet medium for us to derive bliss with least effort. But to remain in that bliss at all times, one has to internalize Him.

Well...there is no end to the experiences of devotees, be it Sevadals, artists or professionals who had come for the 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday. Dear reader, the whole idea of this cover story was to give you those glimpses of the historic event that was the 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday that many were unaware of and therefore not touched by it. We hope that the great stories of service and sacrifice of the Sevadals and the amazing experiences of various people from all over the globe and from different walks of life that has dotted this cover story inspire you, enliven you and give you another opportunity to revel and bask in the glory of Sai.

- **Heart2Heart Team**

We are grateful to D J Das, Hari Shankar, Sudhindran, Alex, Sri Challam and many other Aevadals for their active cooperation and inputs.

## **FEATURE ARTICLES**

### **MUSINGS FROM PRASHANTHI NILAYAM** **CONCERNING THE VEDAS – Part 1**

#### **MY INTRODUCTION TO THE VEDAS** **By Prof. G. Venkataraman**

**This is the text of “Musings From Prashanthi Nilayam” aired on Radio Sai a few days ago.**

Loving Sai Ram and greetings from Prashanti Nilayam.

In this and some of the talks that would follow in subsequent weeks, I intend to say something about the Vedas. On the face of it, this is an atrocious proposition, considering that I cannot chant even a few hymns from the Vedas. Yet, despite this ignorance, the Vedas hold such a fascination for me that I cannot restrain myself from speaking about them. You might ask, “How can you talk about the Vedas when you know so little?” Good question but my reply is that though I know little about the technical aspects, I have been privileged to have a ringside view of some aspects, and it is on that I am largely going to base these talks.

My earliest recollection of something to do with the Vedas goes back to about 1940 or so; maybe even a couple of years earlier. At that time, I occasionally paid a visit to Manamadurai, a small town about 40 km to the south east of the famous temple city of Madurai. Manamadurai is in Ramnad District of Tamil Nadu, and is on the route from Madurai to Rameswaram on the South East coast of India, from where legend has it, that Rama launched His invasion of Lanka. Rameshwaram is thus a popular pilgrim centre.

The British laid a rail track from Madras to Dhanushkodi just beyond Rameshwaram. Everyday, a train named the Boat Mail would go from Madras to Dhanushkodi and also back from Dhanushkodi to Madras. This train would pass through Manamadurai, and the passage of the Boat Mail used to be the big event there every day. The train would cross the River Vaigai across a bridge and lots of people would gather on the river sands just to catch a glimpse of the train as it went by. I have done it too.

By the way, this train was called Boat Mail because it would carry mail from England meant for Madras (now Chennai) that came via Colombo. In those days, the big ships from England would sail direct to Colombo instead of to Madras. The mail would be unloaded there and sent by train to a place in Northern Ceylon, as Sri Lanka used to be called in those days. From there a small boat would carry the mail to Dhanushkodi where the mail would be transferred to the Boat Mail bound for Madras. Mail from Madras to England would follow the reverse route.

Now why am I mentioning all this in a talk that is supposed to be on the Vedas? Just to say something about Manamadurai, and a Vedic school there.

This school was two doors away from the ancestral home of my father's family, and in this house stayed two of my father's elder brothers.

I have gone there a few times, and invariably, I used to be fascinated by the non-stop chants coming from two doors away. This Vedic school or Veda *Paatasala* as it is technically known was apparently in existence for many, many decades, having been founded by a wealthy Chettiar family.

For the record, I should mention that the Chettiars belong to the trading community, and in those days, trade and commerce took them to Burma, Malaya, Singapore and even places like Laos and Cambodia. The Chettiars were generally prosperous, and, in keeping with the traditions of those times, spent a good part of their wealth in charitable activities. For example, many of them endowed a lot of money for temples. Others built choultries or rest houses for pilgrims visiting holy shrines, like Rameswaram, or Tirupathi or Benares. Yet others established Veda *Paatasalas* like the one I mentioned a short while ago.

The Veda *Paatasala* was essentially a Vedic school, which, Brahmin boys, often from somewhat poor families, entered when they were very young, around five to seven years of age, after going through the *Upanayanam* ceremony. Many of you might have seen the mass *Upanayanam* ceremony performed by Swami from time to time.

### **Upanayanam Ceremony**

Well, what exactly is this ceremony and what is its significance? I shall make a few remarks on this here and maybe come back to this theme later for an in-depth exploration. To understand what this ceremony is all about, we must go back to the Vedic age, which means a few thousand years back in time. In those times, a boy born in a Brahmin family was allowed to roam around like a child without any restrictions till the age of five. On reaching that age, there was a change of gear, and the *Upanayanam* ceremony signalled this gear change. The ceremony was essentially an initiation into a disciplined life with strong emphasis on sense and Mind control and focus on God.

One might wonder why all this? Was it not a severe infliction on a five-year old? Well, that is the way we would think, based on today's environment. Five thousand and odd years ago, life was different and Brahmins had the duty of sustaining and spreading Spiritual Knowledge. In practical terms, it was the Brahmins who advised one and all, including kings, on matters relating to *Dharma*, and the observance of various rituals prescribed in the scriptures. The responsibility assigned to Brahmins was onerous, and the training for the job had to begin early. By the way, in later talks, I shall have much to say about many of these rituals and the Vedic Mantras chanted on those occasions.

Let me get back to the *Upanayanam*. The high point of the ceremony is what is called the *Brahmopadesam*, and it consists in the father whispering the sacred Gayathri Mantra into the ear of the young boy. I am sure you all know

about the Gayathri Mantra, especially since Swami has spoken about it so many times. I shall come back to it later.

I am mentioning the Gayathri Mantra just by way of saying that once the boy hears it, he is supposed to be born again, spiritually this time. Childhood period is over, and as a result of this spiritual birth, his life now takes a different turn. I might in passing mention that the Jews have an initiation ceremony called Bar Mitzvah and the Parsi community too has an initiation ceremony. The details and even the objectives of these initiation ceremonies might not quite be the same as the *Upanayanam* ceremony but we might keep in mind the fact that many ancient societies did have a ceremony to mark the transition from childhood to boyhood.

### **The True Brahmachari**

A boy who has undergone the Upanayanam ceremony is called *Brahmachari*. There is a mistaken notion that a *Brahmachari* means a bachelor. At the practical level, a *Brahmachari* is unmarried no doubt but, as Swami has pointed out, the word *Brahmachari* means much more and has nothing really to do with marital status. According to Swami, a true *Brahmachari* is one whose Mind is totally focussed on Brahman or God.

This brings me back to the Veda *Paatasala*. In ancient times, the *Brahmachari* went to a Guru and spent many years in residence in his Ashram learning the Vedas and leading a disciplined life as enjoined in the scriptures. After completing the studies, which took many years, the *Brahmachari* would take respectful leave of the Guru and enter life. He would then get married, and serve society in every way possible, especially by guiding people of various communities who were not versed in the scriptures, on their duties in life. I have already made a brief reference to this a short while ago.

Life changed with the passage of time, and by the nineteenth century, most Brahmins were engaged in tasks other than the propagation of scriptural knowledge. Many became prosperous landlords, wholly preoccupied in supervising agricultural activities on their farms. And when Western style schools and colleges were established by the British, many Brahmins happily embraced Western education, especially as it gave them an opportunity to enter professional life as an administrator in the Government, as a lawyer, as a teacher, as a doctor and so on. As a result of all such sociological forces, it became increasingly necessary to establish Vedic schools where priests could be trained. Please do not think that Vedic schools came into existence only because of the developments I have just mentioned. They existed even earlier, mainly to give Brahmin boys a serious exposure to the Vedas. But sociological changes made it more imperative than ever to have schools that would train people to become priests.

### **Swami Establishes a Vedic School in the 1950's**

To get back to Manamadurai and the Veda *Paatasala* there, I did not pay much attention to it; but its presence did register somewhere in my memory,

and it was only years later that I appreciated the role this and other such *Paatasalas* played. For the record I must also mention that sometime in the fifties, Swami established a *Veda Paatasala* here in Prasanthinilayam. It was managed by late Sri Kamavadhani, a Vedic scholar par excellence. He lived to the ripe old age of one hundred, and I have heard Swami speak many times, most affectionately of Kamavadhanigaru. I have also had the privilege of seeing him a few times in his later years.

Swami established the *Veda Paatasala* not for training priests, but to expose Swami's students to the importance of the Vedas and understanding the need to preserve them. Incidentally, there were no restrictions, and anyone who had a serious interest in the Vedas and a keenness to learn it was admitted to Swami's *Veda Paatasala*. To put it differently, it was not a case of Brahmins only. It is thanks to the pioneering effort of late Kamavadhani, that we see so many students effortlessly chanting various portions of the Vedas almost every day during Darshan, both in the morning and in the evening.

### **The Effect of the Upanayanam Ceremony**

Let me now cut to the year 1947. That was when, on the insistence of my grandmother, my father performed the *Upanayanam* ceremony for me. It was a four-day affair, celebrated in the best of traditions, in a small village in South India very much given to tradition. There were many things associated with the ceremony that I positively detested but then I had no choice; I just had to obey. Many restrictions were placed on me that made me very angry at that time, but there was precious little I could do except to comply.

One thing I realised then was that having undergone the *Upanayanam* ceremony, I was now required to perform a ritual called *Sandhyavandham* three times a day, once in the morning, once in the afternoon and once more in the evening. Among other things, as a part of this ritual I had to chant the Gayathri 32 times. My mother was very strict and would not give me food unless I had completed *Sandhyavandanam*. This would drive me mad but I had no choice. Strangely, I did not think of cheating. I don't know why; I suppose it was all Divine Grace. Though with great reluctance, I somehow pushed myself everyday to chant all the Mantras, which I had sort of got by heart.

I mention all this for a variety of reasons. The first is that I did not know then that the Mantras I was reluctantly chanting were all from the Vedas. Secondly, no one took the trouble to explain to me what these Mantras were all about. Perhaps if I had understood the inner significance, I might have accepted it all in a better spirit. I shall come back to the *Sandhyavandanam* later, but right now let me just quote one sentence from that ritual. This sentence is:

*Aakashath paththam thoyam,  
Yadaa gachhathi sagaram,  
Sarva Deva namaskaaraha,  
Kesavam pradhigachhathi.*

And roughly it means: 'Just as all the water that comes down from the sky eventually finds its way to the ocean, all the prayers that I now offer to the various deities would eventually be received by *Kesava*, the Supreme Lord.'

What a profound thought! That is the beauty of the Vedas. Superficially they might be all about rituals, some of which might, in this day and age, appear not only irrelevant but also objectionable. But when one goes deeper, it is an entirely different matter. One cannot then but admire those ancients for the profundity of their wisdom. All this I shall discuss in detail later.

By the way, I think it is appropriate to mention that Swami often quotes the last part of the Mantra I just referred to. Swami says, *Sarva jeeva namaskaaram, Kesavam Pradhigatchathi. Sarva Jeeva tiraskaaram, Kesavam pradhigatchathi*. The meaning is: all the salutations we offer to fellow humans ultimately reach the Lord. If instead of salutations we hurl abuse, they also eventually reach only the Lord. So, says Swami, we had better be careful about abusing others. We may think we are abusing so and so, but in reality it is God who is being abused. We wouldn't want to do that, would we?

**- Heart2Heart Team.**

## **SHIVA-SAI MAHAA DHEVA**

**By Late Sri G. V. Subba Rao**

**The Holy festival of Shivarathri, the night dedicated to Lord Shiva falls on the 26th of February. Here is a beautiful article explaining to us the Shiva-Shakthi aspect of Bhagavan Baba through various comparisons and parallelisms between Swami and Shiva.**

*Ekam Sath. Vipraah Bahudhaa Vadhanthi.*

'God is one. But the sages call Him by various names.'

The Divine comes down in human form in order to elevate the human, the crown of his creation, to the level of the Divine. Divine incarnations over the vast scale of Time are many: Avathara Hi Asankheyaah, as the Vishnu Puraana states. Although each of the Avathars possesses all divine powers, they exercise selective powers as appropriate to the specific periods, purposes and problems required to be tackled.

### **Shiva and Sai Similarities**

We try to fathom the nature of a particular *Avathaar* by comparing and contrasting, and establishing similarities, equalities or congruences with an established Divine Personality in respect of their mutual characteristics, metaphysics or philosophy, powers, activities, appearances, including their names and their meanings; we then come to an inferential conclusion that the given divine manifestation or *Avathaar* closely approximates or resembles the primordial Divine principle or Form described in our ancient scriptures.

Using the established criteria for such comparisons, twenty five elements or considerations are elaborated below pointing out that the Sathya Sai Avathaar closely resembles the Shiva principle. Hence the appropriateness of the ending of the *Arathi* (waving of lights) song with the expressions, *Shiva-Sai-Mahaa-Deva*.

### **Shiva's Boon to the Great Sage, Bharadvaaja!**

That Sathya Sai Baba is an incarnation of *Shiva-Shakthi* is attested by the *Bharadhvaaja* incident, when the great sage, visiting *Kailash*, (the abode of Lord Shiva) thought he was neglected by *Shiva* and *Shakthi* involved in their cosmic dance; later, Lord *Shiva* graced sage *Bharadhvaaja* with a boon that He would be born thrice successively in the *Bharadhvaaja Gothra* or lineage: first, *Shiva* alone as *Shirdi Sai*, then *Shiva* and *Shakthi* together as *Sathya Sai*, and *Shakthi* alone as *Prema Sai*. [For the complete story in Baba's own words, please go [here](#)].

### **Sai Name and Meaning: Shiva-Shakthi**

The name SAAAYEE itself means: *Shiva-Shakthi*. Etymologically, the first letter Sa(h) signifies the supreme Divinity (*Eeshvara*) or *Shiva*. Ayee, the second word signifies *Shakthi*, *Ambaa* or the universal Divine Mother.

If the two letters are joined, the euphonic combination becomes *Saayee*: The great *Vedhik* scholar and seer of the holy *Manthra*, the *Sathya Sai Gaayathree*, the late Ghandikota Subrahmanya Shasthry versified in *Sanskrit* as follows:

***Shivah Sah Ithi Anena Ukthah  
Ayee Ithi Ambaa Prakeerthithaa  
Thath Samyogah Shivas-Saambah  
Saayee Ithi Prathipaadhyathe***

Baba has repeatedly declared the same, that His essential form is *ShivaShakthi*. In an unusual interview *Baba* graced *Shaasthreeji* and myself (his son), *Swaami* created a tri-colour picture containing His bust in the middle of a *Shiva Linga* seated on the coils of a divine serpent, which covered the top of the *Linga* with its seven hoods (symbolic of the seven worlds or seven levels of consciousness). *Swaami* stated that this *Saayeeshvara* picture represented His "true form!"

If the word *Eesha* (as *Lord Shiva* is commonly addressed) is reversed in its *Sanskrit* rendering, it becomes *Shaayee*, further reducing to *Saayee* or *Sai*, for short. Thus *Swami's* name as well as its meaning point in the direction of *Shiva*.

### **Shiva Sai's Stature and Looks**

*Shiva* is described in *Namakam* as short in stature and handsome in form: *Namo Hrasvaayacha Vaamanaayacha*. He is also praised as being eternally youthful. *Namo Madhyamaayacha Apa Galbhaayacha*. *Baba* can be described in similar terms of short stature and youthful and handsome in His divine demeanour! Short in stature but mighty in mind boggling miracles, as a U.N. diplomat in Delhi once stated: "How come! A five feet person draws five lakhs of people!"

### **Shiva Sai as Jataa Juutee**

*Shiva* is described as *Jataa Juutee*, which means one with curly (matted) locks of hair. It is said in *Rudhram*: *Namah Kapardhinecha Vyuptha-Keshaaya Cha* "Prostrations to the Divine with (matted) curly hair and who is also clean shaven." *Shiva's* hair is described as completely black, *Hari Keshaayopaveethine Pushtaanaam Pathaye Namah*.

Similarly *Baba's* hair is also curly, bushy, and black, bearing striking resemblance with the description of *Jataa Jutee*. He is also clean shaven, "*Vyuaptha Keshi*", like *Shiva*.

### **Shiva-Sai's Colours**

Shiva's form is described in the *Vedhik* hymn: *Asau Yasthaamro Aruna Utha Babhrus-Sumangalah* i.e., crimson, red and orange which are the early morning colours of the Sun. These are the colours of Baba's dress which is sometimes light red, sometimes deep red but almost always orange, the most auspicious colour.

### **Shiva Sai and Vibhuuthi**

Shiva's body is adorned with holy ash resulting from the burning of all desires as represented by Manmatha; it also signifies the truth that ultimately, every thing is not only transient but reduced to mere ashes or dust at the end. Shiva is therefore called *Kaamaari*, the destroyer of lust and also as *Bhasmoddhulitha Muurthi*, a divinity covered with holy ash. Similarly, Sathya Sai who is bereft of any selfish desire used to be covered with holy ash, gushing out as a stream from his empty hands during the *Mahaa Shivarathri* celebrations! It is well known that Baba creates at will, several times daily, in the view of thousands of people, undepleted amounts of holy ash by a mere wave of his empty hand. Like Shiva, Baba can be truly called a *Vibhuuthi Sundhara* (adorned by holy ash). *Vibhuuti* is the hall-mark of Shiva and so is Sathya Sai's. *Vibhuuthi* teaches us the lesson: "Dust we are and to dust we return." This *Vairaagya Bhaava* (feeling of renunciation) frees us from body oriented attachments.

### **Shiva Sai's Universality**

Baba draws to Himself devotees from all classes, castes, creeds, cultures, conditions, countries and from all types of people, just as Shiva whose devotees include both angelic as well as demonic persons. He is equally accessible to one and all, unlike Vishnu whom *Dhevathas* (angels) adore, but whom *Raakshasas* (demons) abhor. Lord Vishnu, in charge of maintaining the world, uses *Dhanda* - the big stick and massive weaponry to bring into proper track the wicked and the demonic.

### **Shiva Sai's Accessibility**

*Baba* is easily accessible and also easily pleased just as Shiva who is called *Bhola Shankar*. He is *Sulabha Prasanna* and *Aashu-Thosha*. Baba daily walks around the lines of devotees graciously accepting their letters; He reaches them Himself with materializations of sacred ash, *Vibhuuthi*. He ministers individually to the needs and requirements of His devotees by loving grace of love-filled miracles.

In the famous *Vedhik* hymn, *Namakam* or *Shath Rudhreeyam*, Shiva is adored as *Kruthsna Veethaaya Dhaavathe Sathvanaam Pathaye Namah!* "Salutations to Shiva who rushes to the help and to the rescue of the devotees." So does our Svaami, as attested by innumerable devotees from all over the wide world. Just as Shiva is termed as *Adhya Vochath, Adhivakhaa* i.e., one who eloquently praises and vouchsafes for his devotees, Baba praises even a small "mustard-like" service rendered by them in terms of "pumpkin-size" encomiums!

## Shiva Sai as Lingodbhavakara

Shiva's first manifested form took the shape of a mighty egg shaped column of radiant effulgence, the **Jyothirlinga** which represents the primordial source, force and fulfillment of all Life. *Linga* symbolises the loving union of God and Nature, *Purusha* and *Prakrithi*, the basis of all creation which is pervaded by Divinity. During *Mahaa Shivaraathri* days, Baba used to materialise a variety of *Lingas* in His stomach and emit them from His divine mouth symbolising the cosmic creative act. He also creates *Shiva Lingas* of all types from his empty hand and gifts them to devotees. Furthermore, He has taken out the original *Lingas* underlying the idols in such holy places as *Somnaath*, *Badharinaath* etc, recharging them in the process and restoring them back to their original niches and pristine glory. Baba is truly a *Lingodhbava-kara*, because *Shiva Lingas* continue to emerge, as willed by Him, from His mere empty palm.

On *Mahaa Shivaraathri* of 1961 *Baba* took out from his mouth the *Aathma-Linga* as a visible evidence of the *Aathmik* principle of Divinity, which inheres in all. During the 1974 *Mahaa Shivaraathri* festival, *Svaami* manifested a ten-inch long, *Aathma Linga*. He then made the astounding declaration that the sight of this *AathmaLinga*, which is described by *KapilaMaharishi*, (a great sage) would free one from the transmigratory cycle of births and deaths! That *Linga* assumed different colours every ten minutes!

## Shiva Sai's Core Teaching

In regard to metaphysics, the *Shiva* oriented principle of "SHIVOHAM" and the *SathyaSai* teaching of *Soham* are non-dualistic, reflecting the *Mahaa-Vaakyas*: **Thath Thvam Asi** and **Aham Brahmaasmi** - (Thou Art That, and, I am the Divine). In *Shiva* worship, it is laid down that the worshiper must develop the feeling of one-ness with *Shiva*, **Soham Bhaavenapuuyajeth**. In the case of *Vishnu* it is near-blasphemy to say "VISHNOHAM"!

## Sai Dhakshinaa Muurthi

*Shiva* is the primal preceptor in the form of *DhakshinaaMurthi*. He is the Lord in *Kailash* facing the southern direction, so the name *Dhakshinaamurthi*. He is the Lord of love and mercy, '*Dhaakshinyam*' as it is said in Sanskrit. He teaches profound spiritual lessons by *Chinmudhras* or symbolic hand gestures, in which the right thumb (representing *Paramaathma*, the Supreme Self) closing with the index finger (i.e. *Jeevaathma* or individual self) indicates fullness or *Puurnathvam*. The other three outstretched fingers indicate the moving away of the worldly qualities of *Sathva*, *Rajas* and *Thamas* - goodness, passion and inertia. Through these divine hand-gestures *Shiva*, as *Dhakshinaamuurthi* boons the gift of Supreme Liberating Knowledge, '*Jnaana Dhakshina*'.

Similarly, the bed-rock of *Sai's* teaching is *Adhvaitha*, non-dual equality of the individual and the Cosmic Self. Like *Dhakshinaamuurthi*, He is truly *Adhvaitha Jnaana Bhaaskara*, the Sun of the knowledge of supreme reality. *Svaami's*

silent, creative and transformational activities are affected, as it were, by His *Shanmudhras* or six types of hand-gestures or circling movements of the hand and fingers.

### **Shiva-Sai's Simplicity**

Simplicity and an austere bearing are the hallmarks of Shiva who is called *Alankaara Varjitha* meaning, free from ornamentation, unlike Lord *Vishnu* who is praised as *AlankaaraPriya* or the one pleased with decorations. In the entire *Vedhik* pantheon of deities, every deity except *Shiva*, are bedecked with ornaments, practically from head to toe. Shiva, although without ornaments, showers all rich ornaments on his devotees; *Kubera*, The Lord of Wealth, owes His proverbial wealth to Shiva.

Similarly, Baba is simple and austere, does not even wear a watch, although He creates time-pieces at will! Like Shiva, He is truly *Alamkaara Varjitha*, bereft of ornaments, and also *AhamkaaraVarjitha*, with no trace of egotism. While Himself free from ornaments, Baba graciously materialises, day-in and day-out, jewellery, gold chains, lockets, wrist watches, icons of gold and precious stones for His devotees. He, like Shiva, is a divine jeweller showering *Vibhuthi*, *Lingas* and precious ornaments. These articles serve as talismans of protection from the ills of body, mind and ego.

### **Shiva Sai's Adornments**

The adornments of Shiva are only natural entities, like the crescent moon radiating cool rays, the serpents round His neck and arms and the thousand-hooded Divine Serpent over His *Linga* (*NaagaLinga* ) symbolising His mastery over the Mind (Moon) and the myriad senses (serpents). In the tri-colour picture created by Svaami for the *Vedhik* scholar Pandith G. Subrahmanya Shaasthry, the seven-headed divine serpent hovers over the *Linga* in the midst of which Baba's bust is manifested!

Similarly, Baba's head is covered, according to Dr. Baranowski, an expert in Kirilian photography, by a large aura, a mass of shining bluish rays. (To read the article about Baba's aura from our previous issue, go here). Devotees see visions of Baba as a moving column of effulgent light, radiating cool rays like the Moon!

### **Shiva Sai's Multiple Forms**

Like Shiva who is adored in the *Vedha* as *Viruupebhyah Vishvaruupebhyah*, *Baba* can take any form, assume different names appearing in several places, simultaneously. Baba, when He was young visited *Viruupaaksha* temple along with a party of relatives and the then Chairman of Bellary Municipality; it was vouchsafed that He was seen simultaneously inside the sanctum sanctorum of the Deity as well as under a tree outside the temple at one and the same time! *Sai* literature has numerous instances of *Baba's* simultaneous multiple appearances at far away places!

## Shiva-Sai as Gangaa Dhaari

Baba , like Shiva, is a *Gangaa Dhaari*, the bearer and giver of *Ganga* waters, Baba in His early teens used to being given by His mother, an oil bath on His birthdays. On one such occasion, Baba declared that there was no need for pouring any water over His head; and lo and behold! Water started flowing from the top of His head and spilled over the mother and an attending relative!

Long afterwards in 1997, Baba gifted safe, piped drinking water supply to a million people in the parched Ananthapur district. He is truly a *Gangaa Dhaari* like *Shiva* who is associated closely with the life-supportive waters, as mentioned in several hymns of *Namakam* chants dedicated to *Shiva*.

## Shiva-Sai as Jala Muurthi

*Shiva* is called *Jala Muurthi*, the life-supportive water-form. This is extensively hinted in the holy *Vedhik* hymn of *Rudhram* or *Namakam*.

***Namah Suudhyaayacha, Sarasyaayacha  
Namo Naadhyaayacha, Namah Kuupyaayacha;  
Namah Sikathyaayacha Pravaahyaayacha;  
Namah Theerthyaayacha Kuulyaayacha.***

Salutations to that Divinity which is closely associated with lakes, rivers, wells, reservoirs, and water falls.

Once I told Baba that hydrologists are sceptical of the long-term viability of water supply to the proposed Sathya Sai Water Project in the dry Ananthapur district and that the abiding solution is the inter-basin water transfer from the far-away Godhaavari River. Baba then made the astounding declaration that He guarantees water supply to the project for many centuries provided the water pipe-lines are built strong enough to last that long! In any case, the Godhaavari originates in *Thryambakeshavara* and He pointed to His heart as the true place of origin of these waters!

## Shiva Sai: Three-Eyed?

When Svaami was in his early twenties, a restless youth who was an incorrigible cricket fan, was given the task of attending to Baba. Baba was reeling out cricket scores of a match being played in far away Madras in order to keep the youth happy! Even then, the boy kept asking questions of Svaami, particularly about the third eye of Shiva. Svaami looked intensely at the young man, when a jet stream of *Vibhuuthi* shot out with gale force from the middle space of the eye-brows of Svaami suchwise, that the youth was catapulted to the other end of the hall! The story is narrated in "Man of Miracles" and also reconfirmed to me recently by the then youth, now in his early sixties. Shiva is adored as *Thryambaka* the three eyed as in the famous hymn of liberation "*Thryambakam Yajaa Mahe*", and so is Sai Baba a *Thrayambaka* the three-eyed one with his *Jnaana Nethra*, the third eye of wisdom, always open.

## **Shiva Sai as Doctor of Doctors**

Shiva is worshipped in the *Shatha Rudhreeya* Hymn as being *Prathamam Dhaivyo Bhishak* as the primordial divine doctor. In the same *Vedhik* text Shiva is adored as *Vishva Bhesaje*, *Vishvaaha Bhesajee*, *Shivaa Rudhrasya Bhesajee*. He is the expert physician curing all the ills. Another hymn praises Him as the Lord and Master of the world of Medicines, *Bhuvanhave Vaarivaskruthaava Oshadheenaam Pathaye Namah*. Like Shiva, Baba is the doctor of doctors, effecting innumerable cures of many illnesses of the Body, Mind, the Intellect and the Ego as well by his mere divine touch; Svaami materialises *Vibhuuthi* with curative properties, as well as actual medicinal tablets; He performed miraculous surgeries, including the materialisation of the necessary surgical implements as asserted, confirmed and reconfirmed, particularly in Howard Murphet's writings.

## **Shiva Sai and Brahmacharya**

Shiva as Dhakshinamuurthi, is a complete celibate, teaching by silence the non-dualistic unity of *Jeevaathma* with *Paramaathma*. He is surrounded by the eternal celibates: Sanaka, Sanandha, Sanath-Kumaara and Sanaathana, the four mind-born sons of the creator Brahma. Thus Shiva is called *Brahma-Charyaashrama Priya* (fond of celibacy).

Similarly, Svaami is a complete celibate, *Brahmachaaari*, who is in constant integrated *Braahmik* consciousness, teaching non-dualism all His life. He is also surrounded by the student *Brahmachaaaris*, that is why he is called *Brahmachaaari Pariveshtitha*. Svaami repeatedly declares that His only property is His students.

## **Shiva Sai as Yogeesvara**

Shiva is the Lord of Yogis, *Yogeesvara*; while Vishnu (Krishna) is the Lord of the Yogas, *Yogeshvara* (vide the 18 yogas in the *Bhagavath Geetha*). Sathya Sai is *Yogijanapriya*, meaning the darling and nourisher of the Yogis. He closely instructs, guides and sustains them to achieve perfection as in the case of the Yogic practitioners in the *Narayana Guha*, (a small cave in the Himalayas ) to whom He gifted a vessel producing food and drink whenever needed!

## **Shiva Sai as Mruthyunjaya**

Shiva is the master or conqueror of death; he is called *Mruthyunjaya*. Baba protects and saves devotees from untimely death i.e., *Apamruthyuhara* as in the case of Mr. Cowan in Madras, Mr. Raadhaakrishna of Kuppam and Pandith GhandiKota Subrahmanya Shaasthy in August 1985. (To read stories of resurrections, please go here.)

## **Shiva Sai's Seating**

Shiva is seated on a tiger skin, *Vyaaghra Charmaaaseena*, suggestive of the control of cruel animalistic qualities. Svaami, in *Prashaanthi Mandhir*, is daily seated on a chair underneath of which is a tiger headed skin. In his wandering youth days, Svaami's only luggage piece was a tiger skin (with a pair of towels)!

## **Shiva Sai's Selfless Service**

Shiva is an ascetic, a renunciate, a *Mahaa Viraagi* and dedicated to *Loka Sangraha*, the welfare of the worlds (e.g. He swallowed deadly poison and saved the world). Svaami, likewise, is supremely detached within and intensely active without and performs loving selfless service, through free educational, medical, humanitarian relief activities, such as provision of drinking water supply to lakhs of people.

He tirelessly teaches *Sai Shadvarga*, that is, the six human values of truth, righteousness, peace, love, non-violence and selfless service/sacrifice for *Lokasangraha* in order to counteract the poison of *Arishadvarga*, the six inner enemies of Lust, Anger, Greed, Attachment, Pride and Jealousy.

## **Shiva Sai , the Athyaashrami**

Svaami like Shiva is universal, transcends caste, class, creed, country, culture etc. He is beyond all orders and categories; He is truly an *Athya Aashramee*, like Shiva. He teaches universality: "There is only one Race, the race of humanity; only one Religion, the religion of love; only one Language, the language of the heart and only one God and He is omnipresent!"

## **Shiva Sai: Yanthra, Manthra and Thanthra**

For each aspect of Shiva, there is a symbolic *Yanthra* or numerical (and geometrical) representation. In the case of Shiva, the Absolute, it is number **nine**. Letter "*Shi*" in the science of *Manthras* is signified by the number of five and the letter "*va*" equals number four, making a total of **nine**. Eeashvara connected with creation is signified by number **eight**. And an *Avathaar* is signified by number **seven**, which is the hall mark of *Shiva Shakthi*. *Sai* is *Sapthamayee*, with seven fold powers, principles, and purposes.

Similarly, for each manifestation of *Shiva* there is a *Manthra* or sacred sound-formula. As *Rudhra-ShivaMahaa-Dheva*, the *Manthra* in the *Gaayathree* form is:

***Thathpurushaaya Vidhmahe,  
Mahaa Dhevaaya Dheemahi  
Thanno Rudhrah Prachodhayaath.***

In respect of Bhagavaan Baba, the *Gaayathreemanthra* is as follows:

**Om. Saayeeshvaraaya Vidhmahe  
Sathya-dhevaaya Dheemahi,  
Thannah-sarvah Prachodhayaath**

We realise that Sai is Eeshvara i.e., Shiva.  
We meditate on this God of Truth.  
May That Almighty, All in-All personality, lead us to liberation.

Similarly, for each manifestation of Shiva, there is a *Thanthra*, a schema of adoration, worship and prayer. In the case of Shiva, the adoration is through the chanting of the *Shatha Rudhreeyam*; the worship is done by pouring water over the holy *Linga*, called *Abhishekam*, and the prayer is contained in the *Vedhik* hymn of *Chamakam*. In the case of *Sathya Sai*, there are similar forms of adoration, worship and prayer: *Sathya Sai Gaayathree* chanting, *Sai Ashtothara NaamaPuuja* (chanting 108 names of Sai) and *Aarathi* with the waving of lights. The *Aarathi* song is addressed to *Shiva-SaiMahaa-Dhevaa!* And finally comes the distribution of *Vibhuuthi*, which is the hall-mark of both *Shiva* and *Sai*, the-visible manifestation of *Shiva Thathva* being the non-dualistic principle of "Soham" (Sah + Aham = I am Divinity): Sai ShivoHam.

Baba has repeatedly asserted the innate Shiva Sai principle in the following verse:

**Sarva Naama Dharam, Shivam  
Sarva Ruupa Dharam, Shaantham  
Satchidhaanandham Adhvaitham  
Sathyam Shivam Sundharam.**

The supreme Felicity which bears all names;  
The supreme Serenity which assumes all forms;  
The non-dual Divinity, the Being-awareness-Bliss  
That is Truth, Goodness and Beauty.

In conclusion, we meditate on SAI SHIVOHAM, the five lettered, non-dualistic *Panchaakshari Manthra*. It signifies oneness of *Shiva*, *Sai*, and our Self; this is in contrast to the dualistic *manthras* of *Namasshivaaya*.

SAISHIVOHAM means that this *Sathya Sai* is the visible living manifestation of the unitary *Shiva* principle of the identity of *Jeevathma* and *Paramaathma*, that is, of the individual Self with the Supreme Self; this is the teaching of both *Shiva* and *Sai* and also the supreme teaching of *Adhvaitha Vedhaantha* taught in the *Upanishaths*, India's most ancient scriptures.

Courtesy: Saidarshan.org

- Heart2Heart Team.

## **THE VISION OF NON-DUALITY IV**

### **'Shivoham' – The Essence of Shivarathri**

*This article seeks to improve your understanding of the subtle spiritual significances of Lord Shiva and to elaborate this in the context of the Shivarathri festival. It also points the way for the reader to grasp a true picture of who he really is and help him further on the path.*

#### **Lord Shiva – The Personal Aspect**

Shiva is extolled in the Shiv-Purana and our mythological literature; hymns are sung in praise of Him by great masters like Vyasa, Adi Shankara and Vivekananda. Words fail to do full justice to the Lord of the Snows, both in His personal and impersonal aspects.

Shiva, the Lord of Kailasa, the great Ascetic, symbolises perfect *gyana* (spiritual wisdom), *tapas* (austerities) and *vairagya* (dispassion). He is all holiness and auspiciousness. The One with full command over the senses and the mind, Shiva destroys Cupid or Manmatha, also known as Kamadeva, the God of desire.

Shiva destroys him through His third eye or the eye of *gyana*. Thereby showing the supremacy of love as against kama (lust). *Gyana*, true spiritual wisdom, teaches us that our true Self is beyond gender and body consciousness.

Mahadeva, the Supreme Lord, is clothed in an elephant's skin, the waters of the Ganga surging through His matted hair. He is the Supreme Purifier; devoid of duality; unborn; eternal; the cause of all causes; the Fourth state of being; beyond darkness and without beginning or end. When we pray to Him we commune with God in all these aspects.

#### **Significance of Shivarathri and the Impersonal Shiva**

The night of Shiva or the Shivarathri, occurring this month can be understood by contemplating on Shiva as more than just the Personal aspect of God; He is also the Impersonal aspect or the Supreme Brahman.

Swami is likewise understood and worshipped by millions of His devotees in both these aspects. Swami has clearly explained this transcendental nature which is none other than the Shiva of the Vedantists and the Narayana of the Upanishads. He said,

*“Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara, are like the Heads of three departments in an organization, (Creation, Preservation and Destruction) who report to the Chief, the Transcendental aspect of God or Brahman. You can approach the Chief (Me) directly by the heart to heart connection, by love to love, without having to go through the departmental heads!”*

In one of His discourses, Swami made an historic declaration-

*“This Divine Manifestation (of Swami) is one where all the names of God, and all the forms of God, ascribed by man to God, through the ages are present in full!”*

It is here, namely in Sai, that the followers of Shiva, Vishnu and all seekers arrive at a common goal, namely the Oneness of God and His transcendental nature.

### **The Transcendental Aspect of Shiva by Adi Shankara**

Adi Shankara’s 6 stanzas in his treatise on the “Nirvana Shatakam”, give a view of this transcendental aspect of Shiva. He ends each stanza with the refrain - *“Chidananda Rupam, Shivoham, Shivoham”* - that is; “I am the soul of Knowledge and Bliss, I am Shiva, I am Shiva.” The reader can also apply the following stanzas to the inner reality of his true Self and contemplate thus.

The first 2 stanzas of the Nirvana Shatakam indicate the “Neti Neti” principle of discrimination as applicable to the Jiva.

*“I am not the mind, intellect, thought or ego  
Nor the five senses, or the five elements,  
Nor the Pranas, or the five sheaths, or the five organs of action.”*

The jiva is bound by these limiting adjuncts. Shankara points out that jivahood is a relative state of existence and illusory - *maya*.

In the next 3 stanzas, Shankara, transcending all thoughts on body-consciousness and concepts of duality, declares most emphatically-

*“I have no duty or purpose, no desire, nor freedom,  
no virtue, nor vice, pleasure nor pain,  
nor sacred word, pilgrimage, Veda or sacrifice,  
nor fear, nor death, nor caste distinction,  
no father no mother, no friend or relation,  
no master or disciple, etc.”*

In a shattering of previous earthly conditioning, all names, forms and attachments which bind the jiva are eschewed. Every other identification with duality at the mental, vital and psychic level is rejected by the process of elimination and the jiva “dives” into the ocean of *Satchitananda* (being-awareness-bliss) to merge with the Transcendental Non-Dual One. He experiences Advaita Darshanam Gyanam. Thus Swami’s statements “A dual mind is half-blind” and “Happiness is union with God” become realized within.

### **Swami in the 80th Birthday Discourse...**

Shankara tells us that “The Jiva is not different from Brahman” in other words our true nature is not different from God. In the 80th birthday discourse Swami

exhorted us **“Who is God? In fact, you yourself are God. Everyone should develop the firm conviction, ‘I am God.’”**

At first glance these statements may appear contradictory to Shankara’s expressions in the Nirvana Shatakam above. There is no contradiction whatsoever. The jiva is one with Brahman, on shedding its limitations caused by wrongful identification, ignorance and attachment to *mana* (mind), *buddhi* (intellect), *chitha* (thoughts) and *ahankara* (ego). The Atman is none of these. In the last stanza, Shankara triumphantly and resoundingly declares:

*“I am changeless, formless, all pervading and omnipresent, free from all attachments, and the knowable. I am the soul of Knowledge and Bliss - I am Shiva, I am Shiva!”*

It is the declaration of self-realisation that all seekers are reaching for as their goal and it is grand vision of non-duality that Shankara expounds throughout.

### **Rise to Our True Nature**

The rishis and seers of yore, who were selfless and thought about the good of humanity, made very bold and in-depth statements for our benefit, which literally blow our breath away. The knowledge of the immortal Self has made them utterly fearless, while their compassion for suffering humanity makes them speak out the One Truth in various telling expressions.

Recently, a senior office-bearer of the Sathya Sai Organisation mentioned in the Divine Presence, that he once asked Swami if he could view the world through Swami’s eyes.

Swami replied *“If you were to do that, you would give up your job, your wife and children”* for such is the purifying knowledge of Immortality, the Non-Dual, the Fourth State, *“It is Paripoorna Prema”* or *“Love in totality”* - Swami.

### **A Beautiful Example From Swami...**

Swami, the Divine Mother, familiarises us, His children, with these great truths by means of simple anecdotes, and analogies so as not to shock the novice out of his wits and shy him away. The Mother makes the truth more palatable and acceptable. This is to drive away the child’s fear of that which gives freedom from all fear! As an example, Swami tells the story of a lion cub who grew among a flock of sheep and mistook itself for one of them.

*“This lion cub, who had lost its mother, and was reared by a sheep, would take itself to be a sheep and was very timid, subdued and fearful. It would move about with the sheep, eat grass, etc. One day a full grown lion chanced upon them and all the sheep along with the cub tried to flee. The lion was perplexed to see the cub flee from him. So he caught hold of the cub and asked him as to why he was behaving thus. The cub full of fear and trembling, said ‘Please don’t eat me up.’ The lion out of pity took him to a pond and made him look at his reflection, and said ‘You are a lion. You are one of us.*

*See! You look just like me. Now stop this nonsense and roar like me! The cub, still trembling, tried to roar, but could only bleat. After several tries, he roared successfully. He was surprised and happy. He was freed from all fear! He now moved among the lions happily as one of them."*

The analogy is obvious - the Lion symbolizes the Atman, while the sheep symbolizes body-consciousness, the latter keeping us far away from awareness of our true nature.

The wakeful state (in which the reader is now in) constitutes the entire gamut of worldly sense experiences, body consciousness, the state of duality, subject-object relationship, mixture of joy-sorrow, the three gunas, etc. 'Denial of the world', which at first impression may appear a negative action, is rather a rising above this relative state of consciousness into a higher state of awareness – to be who we really are.

### **"When Truth is known, where then is this world?"- Adi Shankara**

"When Truth is known, where then is this world?"- Adi Shankara. Perceptions which are body and jiva-related, and which appear very real in the waking state, lose their meaning. The world then appears before our eyes as:

1. Shadows, or
2. As experiences in a dream, or
3. As the sport and play of consciousness.

We are thus, not affected, activated or driven by desires and fears for "The thirst of the man in a dream cannot be quenched by the waking state water". We are free.

The seeker then becomes the Awakened One! He is Non-Dual. He enjoys supreme Bliss. His Heart is One with the Heart of the Universe. He has attained to the state of "Constant Integrated Awareness."

We can pray to Lord Shiva-Sai to grant us this state of consciousness, most auspiciously on Shivarathri - for it is our birthright.

### **Swami Vivekananda's Hymn to Lord Shiva**

Salutation to Shiva! Whose glory  
Is immeasurable, Who resembles sky  
In clearness, to Whom are attributed  
The phenomena of all creation,  
The preservation and dissolution  
Of the universe! May the devotion,  
The burning devotion of this my life  
Attach itself to Him, to Shiva, Who,  
While being Lord of all, transcends Himself.

In whom Lordship is ever established,  
Who causes annihilation of delusion,  
Whose most surpassing love, made manifest,  
Has crowned Him with a Name above all names,  
The Name of "Mahadeva", the Great God!  
Whose warm embrace, of Love personified,  
Displays, within the heart, that all power  
Is but a semblance and a passing show.

In which the tempest of the whole past blows,  
Past Samskaras, stirring the energies  
With violence, like water lashed to waves;  
In which the dual consciousness of "I" and "Thou"  
Plays on: I salute that mind unstable,  
Centered in Shiva, the abode of calm!

Where the ideas of parent and produced,  
Purified thoughts and endless varied forms,  
Merge in the Real one; where the existence ends  
Of such conceptions as "within", "without"--  
The wind of modification being stilled--  
That Hara I worship, the suppression  
Of movements of the mind. Shiva I hail!

From Whom all gloom and darkness have dispersed;  
That radiant Light, white, beautiful  
As bloom of lotus white is beautiful;  
Whose laughter loud sheds knowledge luminous;  
Who, by undivided meditation,  
Is realized in the self-controlled heart:  
May that Lordly Swan of the limpid lake  
Of my mind, guard me, prostrate before Him!

Him, the Master-remover of evil,  
Who wipes the dark stain of this Iron Age;  
Whom Daksha's Daughter gave Her coveted hand;  
Who, like the charming water-lily white,  
Is beautiful; who is ready ever  
To part with life for others' good, whose gaze  
Is on the humble fixed; whose neck is blue  
With the poison swallowed:  
Him, we salute!

- Sri Suresh Rao and the Heart2Heart Team

## SERIAL ARTICLES

### SHIRDI SAI PARTHI SAI

#### Part 14

*(Continued from the previous issue)*

### **ACT ONE SCENE 3**

*Kondamma Raju comes with food to meet his Guru Venkavadhoota.*

K. RAJU: Salutations sir!

GURU: Come Raju, come! Sit down. .... This is all God's will! Perhaps only now you could find the time to come to your *Guru Venkavadhoota*.

K. RAJU: After one long year, I now have the good fortune to be able to see you!

GURU: For Venkavadhoota, the whole world is his home! Like the wind I move here and there, and my feet never stay put in one place. One moment here, next moment there!

K. RAJU: Swami! Of late I am feeling very much agitated, and I am always thinking of you. The age of Kali has become the age of famine! The mind of man has become polluted. Wherever you turn, you see only lawlessness, wickedness, and injustice.

GURU: I fully understand what you are saying.

K. RAJU: Forgive me sir! Talking about all sorts of things I completely forgot about the eatables that I have brought for you! In keeping with tradition, I have personally made this dish for my revered *Guru*! Please accept what I have brought.

GURU: Very happy! Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram.....*[starts eating]* Kondamma, like you I also belong to the Ratnakara lineage! Our tradition has always been to serve good and noble people. There is no power greater than that conferred by service to the Master. Ram, Ram, Ram... Food is the very embodiment of God! Ram, Ram, Ram ... Dishes may differ but the satisfaction of consumption is the same. The Names and the Forms may vary but God is present everywhere in a most wondrous way, including in you and me.

Ram, Ram, Ram..... God shows His Omnipresence in many ways but man's vision is restricted to the external world. Poor fellow, he believes that what is visible to the eyes alone is real. He fails to understand that what lies beyond the visible is the Infinite. That is God! He also does not realise that he himself

is God!! To see the Inner Self, to see God inside, one must open one's mind's eye.

K. RAJU: Swami, please tell me what the Inner Self means.

GURU: Through the use of his senses, man is able to experience the purity of water, the heat of the fire, the sweetness of fruits, the taste of food, the coolness of the breeze, the strength of the earth and even the vastness of space. But he is not able to comprehend what lies behind all these! Happiness produces brightness, but is it the same as the brightness of sunlight? Pain produces gloom, but is it the same as the darkness of the night?

K. RAJU: Swami! Your words are so comforting to me!

GURU: There is more Kondamma! While Creation has only five characteristics, man, who has one more, has gone astray. His mind has strayed onto the wrong path, and as a result he is agitated and has also become selfish! ..... At the end of it all, he is restless!

K. RAJU: Is there no way to remove this restlessness?

GURU: There is! In every age, the wicked get punished and the good are protected. You know that in every age, Lord Narayana Himself incarnates to re-establish Righteousness [*Dharma*].

K. RAJU: Yes I know, but in this Kali age.....?

GURU: Look my dear fellow! Man can stop a small flow but not a deluge. Only God can do that. The world is ridden with attachment and it is like a deluge. To re-establish *Dharma* in this polluted world, to protect the good, to show the proper path to people in the grip of illusory attachment, Narayana will incarnate again - yes, even in this Kali Age!

K. RAJU: Swami, when is that glorious moment going to come?

GURU: Very soon...Lord Narayana is going to take birth in **OUR** Ratnakara family! You will definitely have His *Darshan*! He will shower His love on you. He will show the proper way to the world. He will wipe out the troubles of the good and re-establish *Dharma*. He will - and this is the Truth!

K. RAJU: Swami, I am so happy that the very Lord is going to incarnate. All along, I was plagued with doubts, but now your words offer much comfort. Thank you!

GURU: Why all this?! Everything will be auspicious! I have to leave now and continue my journey.

K. RAJU: Swami, this place has been sanctified by your feet! When will I get again the opportunity of serving you?

GURU: Have I not already answered that Kondamma?! Know one thing for sure. Humanity is one. Service to man is service to God. The heart saturated with Love does not make distinctions like mine and thine. It derives satisfaction by serving all. I now take your leave. May all people be happy! May the whole world be happy!

**END OF ACT ONE**

*(To be continued)*

**-Heart2Heart Team**

## GITA FOR CHILDREN-

### PART 16

*(Continued from the previous issue)*

57. 'Now let Me see, where am I? Oh yes, I have been telling you about the *Yogi*, equanimity and all that. Now why on earth does the *Yogi* go through so much trouble and such an elaborate discipline? He does all this in order to experience Reality.'

58. 'Arjuna, people look at the world and imagine it is real. I am sorry to inform you that it is not, at least not in the way people imagine. Truly speaking, Reality is within you, and what you see outside as the world is merely a reflection of what is within.'

59. 'Let Me briefly illustrate My point before I get back to the *Yogi*. You see a man and say that he is a bad fellow. You judge him to be bad because there is bad in you! Unless you know what is bad, how can you declare him to be bad?'

60. 'This is where the true *Yogi* is different. The *Yogi* identifies himself totally with God and sees God not only within himself but also everywhere, including in all beings. Since he sees only God everywhere, for him there are no bad people!'

61. Arjuna frowns and mumbles, 'Krishna, I am not getting the point. Can You please explain again?'

62. Krishna smiles and says, 'Yes I shall. Firstly understand that God is the only Reality there is; that is because God is the only entity that is permanent. Next, Reality is within, for the simple reason that the Heart is the permanent residence of God. Thirdly, God is everywhere because the outside is merely the reflection of the inside. So, how can you ever say there is bad in the world? It is all the result of wrong vision!'

63. Arjuna protests and says, 'But Krishna, there is something very weird about Your argument! If there is nothing bad in the Universe, then why talk about good guys and bad guys, why talk about *Dharma* and *Adharma*, and why this war in which You are asking me to fight? I am totally lost and back to square one!'

64. Krishna laughs and says, 'Arjuna, I can well understand your problem. In fact, this is the confusion that almost all people have. Just keep listening carefully, and in due course your doubts would all vanish. Getting back to the subject of Reality, in simple terms it refers to the Cosmic Unity underlying diversity. He who sees Me in everything and everything in Me has understood Reality. Such a one I shall never forsake. And when this person sheds his body, he would merge forever in Me.'

65. 'Arjuna, the Wise man always feels is that he is in all, also that all are in him. This is a very important point. The Truth is that man is a limb of Society, Society is a limb of Nature and Nature is a limb of God. To give an analogy, your nail is a part of your finger. The finger is a part of your hand. The hand is a part of your arm and the arm is a part of your whole body. Got it?'

66. 'Having identified himself with God in this manner that is as a limb of God, the Wise man now sees everyone else also as a limb of God. In this way, he feels that all are part of God. Further, as he has identified himself with God, he now feels that all are a part of him!'

67. 'Coming now to the other aspect namely, "I am in all", the Wise man sees it this way. Let us say you see a hungry starving man. Feeling pity you might give him some food. A Wise man would do likewise but he will not do it out of pity. He would say, "I am hungry and let me give myself some food!" This is the way he sees God and himself in all! Strange is it not? But all this comes from tight mental discipline.'

68. Arjuna now says, ' Krishna, You talk of regulating the Mind and all that and make it sound so simple. But are You not aware that the Mind is so difficult to control? It wanders so easily. How on earth is one to tame this wild beast? The Mind is as difficult to control as the wind, and here You are telling me, "Arjuna, it is all very simple, and stuff like that!"

69. Krishna gently replies, 'Arjuna, I understand what you are saying but don't you realise that you are quitting before even giving it a try? That is a sign of great weakness. True the Mind is fickle and all that but people HAVE tamed the Mind before. If they can do it why not you?'

70. 'People do all sorts of things, go through all sorts of difficulties and troubles in order to achieve power, acquire wealth and so on. Man is ready to climb the highest mountains, go to the bottom of the ocean etc., etc., but when it comes to God and experiencing Inner Reality, suddenly things become impossible!'

71. 'No Arjuna, it is not impossible. The fact is that people do not want such things. There is not enough yearning for God. If the hunger is there, the impossible would immediately become possible.'

72. Arjuna takes in all this and stroking his chin slowly says, 'OK, You have a point there. Let me now ask You something else. Let us say there is a person who has tried very hard to do all the things You are now recommending but has not quite made it during his lifetime. Does that mean all his life ends up as a big waste?'

73. Krishna replies, 'No, not really. Spiritual evolution is a slow process involving successive stages of refinement. If the *Jivatma* does not get purified enough in one birth, it gets another chance to improve further. Thus the person you are talking about would be born again and Destiny would place him in a situation where he can start from where he left off earlier.'

74. 'In this manner, going through many life cycles, he slowly advances. Eventually he becomes sufficiently refined to achieve the status of a *Yogi*. Every birth is a fresh chance; but it can also be squandered, if one is not careful. In a manner of speaking, it is all like the familiar game of snakes and ladders!'

75. '*Yogis* come in different types. The type of *Yogi* I like best is one who worships Me with faith and is always thinking of Me. If you have total faith, you do not have to worry about achieving 100% Purity. When you have earned enough deservedness, I shall, out of Compassion, extend My hand and pull you to Me! Of this you can be sure.'

END OF CHAPTER SIX

***To be continued....***

**-Heart2Heart Team**

## WINDOW TO SAI SEVA

### SAI SEVA IN KUWAIT

#### Unity, Purity And Divinity In Action: Three Seva Reports From Kuwait

##### Sri Sathya Sai Medical & Counselling Camp

*“We were checked very well by the doctors. We have to pay a lot of money for the medical tests if done outside in some laboratory. As a result of this camp, we could know about our health condition.”*

This is what Rita\*, an industrial worker from Bangladesh working in Kuwait, who was examined at the medical camp organized by the Sai devotees in Kuwait said. The excellent and wide-ranging medical camp was held in December 2005 with the primary goal of reaching out to those who cannot afford private health care.

The beneficiaries were industrial and hygiene workers of various nationalities. The industrial workers were drawn from companies engaged in the oil fields and refineries of Kuwait. The hygiene workers belong to companies engaged in maintaining the hygiene of big industrial establishments and buildings. Most of the workers were exposed to industrial hazards on a daily basis such as exposure to high noise equipment, continuous contact with corrosive chemicals and continuous inhalation of hydrocarbon fumes and carbon dusts to name but a few.

The medical profession is a restricted and regulated profession in Kuwait and hence medical camps have to be conducted after getting permission from the Kuwait Medical Association. The medical camp was conducted in association with the Indian Doctors Forum (IDF), a recognized group of Indian doctors in Kuwait, having community welfare and service as one of their main objectives. The KMA thus accorded approval for the Medical Camp to be conducted by Kuwait Sai Centre and issued a No Objection Certificate.

The initial hurdles were cleared by the unseen Divine Hand and the required number of doctors was available to counsel and render medical advice. The workers who were initially apprehensive and hesitant to register themselves soon turned up in large numbers and gave their names for the camp.

##### **The Medical Camp Begins**

The Medical Camp was held on the 16th of December 2005 at the premises of the India International School in Kuwait. As the camp begun Swami's presence could be felt in the orderly way the various activities and tests were being conducted. A total of **563 workers** were examined in the camp by forty-eight doctors over a span of six hours. A total of one hundred and twenty six volunteers participated in the camp and helped with all the testing activities. Swami's presence could be felt in all the activities and aspects of the Medical camp.

In addition, there were twelve optometrists from the Kuwait Optometrists Association who conducted Vision Tests for the workers. A total of six nurses, eight lab technicians and one ECG technician were available to assist the doctors and carry out relevant tests. The **Kuwait Heart Foundation**, a subsidiary of the Ministry of Health, had provided a Mobile Cardiac Care Unit, along with its medical personnel to carry out blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol checks for the workers.

### **Service with Enthusiasm**

The volunteers started gathering in large numbers as early as at 7.00 in the morning and could be seen going to their allotted positions with enthusiasm and zeal. *“All of us were bound by a common cause - that is to serve the workers and the community at large,”* says a volunteer recollecting the medical camp.

The tests were carried out in a sequence starting with a general checkup consisting of **height, weight, blood pressure, fasting blood sugar measurement, urine test,** and lastly **eye testing.** Based on these test results, the workers were examined by General Physicians to determine their state of health, who then determined whether these workers needed to consult specialists. These specialists consisted of Gynaecologists, Dermatologists, General Physicians, Urologists, Nephrologists, Neurologists, Ophthalmologists, ENT Specialists and Cardiologists.

One of the many doctors who served in the camp said to the Sai volunteers, after the camp, *“Yours was one of the best and well organised medical camps that I ever attended. I really enjoyed being there. In the 60 (62 to be precise) odd cases that I saw, around 10 -15 cases really need a follow-up.”*

Prescriptions were written advising the workers as their future course of action to help them alleviate their problems. Keeping in mind the laws of Kuwait, medicines were not distributed in the camp.

*“There was an abundance of love everywhere as the doctors, nurses, lab technicians and volunteers put in their best, unmindful of the strain and helped assess the health conditions of the workers. When we work for others, we basically transform ourselves into a better person. We learn to be more patient, more loving and caring and develop all the values which Swami wants us to imbibe and practice,”* said one volunteer serving in the camp.

### **Long Suffering Patient is Relieved**

A person who was suffering from chronic body pain and who had not been helped by previous hospital visits was advised by a friend to visit the medical camp. He was wondering - “Am I going to get a solution for my problem here in this camp? Is it going to be another waste of time?!”

Swami, the master doctor, helped him at the first consultation itself. The General Physician diagnosed the health problem as Hydrocele and advised

him to consult an urologist who confirmed the diagnosis, prescribed proper medicines and advised the person to undergo surgery. The medicines gave the required relief and the person was able to find a cure to this long-standing problem.

### **Important detection of Diabetic, Cardiovascular and Gynaecological problems**

The camp was unique in many ways. The workers were of various nationalities, belonging to various faiths but their faith in the camp and in the doctors was unbelievable. **Swami guided the doctors in identifying 27 diabetic cases. One lady worker had a very high sugar count and was on the verge of collapsing. Detection of the diabetic problem enabled her to obtain advice from the diabetologist and find relief of her symptoms.** Impressed with the enthusiasm and dedicated service of the Sai volunteers, Dr. Noble Zachariah, a diabetologist said,

*“I would like to record my appreciation of the excellent work by you and all members of your association in conducting the medical camp. It was a pleasure to be associated with a compassionate and competent organisation like yours.”*

Many workers were identified as having other health problems. The mobile unit of the Kuwait Heart Foundation was used to check cholesterol values of the workers who were identified as being potential cases for cardiac related problems so that they could make lifestyle changes or receive medicines. The gynaecological examination of the ladies helped them to understand their problems better and provided them an opportunity to get expert medical advice in the matter.

### **Bhagavan’s Grace in Abundance**

Swami says that “You put in the efforts. I will do the rest for you.” His Grace was evident from the fact that the entire camp was conducted in a peaceful manner without any hitch or any problem, say the volunteers. The saying “Help Ever Hurt Never” of Bhagawan always inspired them to be more compassionate and forbearing to other human beings, they add. Swami says “Start the day with love, spend the day with love, end the day with love”. There was an abundance of love everywhere.

### **A Special Narayana Seva**

Bhagavan gave another opportunity to serve people whereby in addition to the medical camp, there was a special Narayana Seva for all the people who visited the camp. There was a continuous flow of food for all the people. A total of **800** persons were provided with breakfast and almost **200** people including doctors, nurses and volunteers were provided with lunch. The camp concluded at 2.00 pm with a valedictory function.

With the abundant Grace of Swami, many of the workers could be checked and informed about their state of health such as Jay\*, a Sri Lankan hygiene worker, who said,

*“The medical camp was well organized. We could good medical advice which is very difficult to get unless you pay for the services. We thank your association for having provided us an opportunity to get ourselves checked by good doctors.”*

Swami thus provided these workers with Sai-Health Care and the Kuwait Sai Centre with an opportunity to serve others. The boundaries of religion, nationality, caste and creed were submerged in the ocean of love as we saw God in each other and realized that we are serving the Lord – the Narayana in us. As one volunteer put it,

*“At the outset, I wish to thank Bhagavan, who gave us an opportunity to do this Seva and made it a grand success. Also, I would like to thank Shanti Association and the Committee members for organising this big task, thereby giving me an opportunity to do some small seva. The **Gulf-SPIC** employees were so happy and impressed over the way in which the camp was conducted and each one was received and guided with so much of love and affection by our volunteers. I pray to Swami to give me more and more opportunities for doing such seva in the days to come.”*

**“To remove the evil of egoism, Seva is the most efficient instrument. Seva will also impress on the person doing Seva the unity of all mankind. He who dedicates his time, strength and skill to service can never meet defeat, distress or disappointment, for seva is the own reward.”**

- Baba

### **Sri Sathya Sai Mass Blood Donation Campaign**

To commemorate further Swami’s 80th birthday the 2nd of October 2005 was (literally) a red letter day for Kuwait Sai Centre, as a mass blood donation campaign was conducted. The required Mobile Blood Donation vehicle with adequate beds was supplied by the Central Blood Bank at Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital and the venue was kindly arranged at the Indian Community School for Girls. Thus Swami ensured that a large space was available for us to accommodate all the equipment, staff and the donors.

### **Swami Plans and Guides - We Execute**

The Blood Donation Seva Team drew elaborate plans and contacted the members of Kuwait Sai Centre. Most of the members, who were contacted, consented to come and donate blood. Thus the initial concern that there may not be adequate donors was dispelled. The initial count totaled sixty five at the planning stage. On the eve of the Campaign the concern that there may be

fewer donors was replaced with the concern that we may have too many donors and too little time and beds to accommodate.

### **The Donation Day Arrives**

The D-Day dawned and the volunteers from the Blood Donation Seva Team and the medical team of one doctor, three administrative staff and three nurses sent by the Blood Bank were in place ready to begin by 5.00 pm. The donors started pouring in from the word go and soon the registration counter saw an unending stream of donors eager to register themselves and donate blood. The donor seating section was overflowing with every one eager to donate blood.

### **Swami says that ‘Blood Is Liquid Love’**

With Swami’s grace the donation process was quite fast and the Blood Bank staff worked fast catering to the requirements of the donors as well as counseling members on their problems. Some of the members who had donated previously but whose blood was diagnosed as having some problems were counseled by the staff and asked to report to the hospital for further checks. Dr.Wael, the doctor-in-charge of the group from the blood bank, worked tirelessly and with a smile on his face thus endearing himself to the donors and members of Kuwait Sai Centre.

The administrative staff also put in their best to record the donor data and generate relevant documents within a short span of time. The nurses put in their heart and soul, speaking lovingly to the donors so that no one would feel any discomfort during the donation process. The veins were identified with ease and all needles were inserted without causing any pain to the donor.

### **Energetic Volunteers and Donors**

Energetic volunteers could be seen ensuring that the donors were seated properly and sent in an orderly way for preliminary checks and donor documentation. Anxiety was writ large in the faces of some female donors on account of possible rejection due to low haemoglobin levels. Juice, water and snacks were served to the donors to provide them with the required energy after the donation process was over. Barring a few, most of the donors could be seen looking energetic and as fresh as before. Indeed they were even keen to come back as one man commented,

*“The Blood Donation campaign was well organized. The arrangements for donating blood as also the post donation care were excellent. We look forward to many such Blood Donation campaigns in future.”*

### **Abundant Giving**

The planned completion time of 8.30 pm was reached with still many donors left to donate! The Blood Bank staff were accommodative and agreed to wait and accept all the donors which meant that all the donors could donate except

for seven as the nurses ran out of blood bags to collect the blood. It was 10.00 pm and time to wind up but the required number of blood bags were brought from the Blood Bank at that late hour and the remaining donors could donate blood.

The smiling and hardworking staff worked ceaselessly till about 10.30 pm when the last donor could donate blood. At the end of the donation process, statistics revealed that a total of 109 donors had registered.

### **Thank You Bhagavan**

There were absolutely no hurdles or impediments to the entire blood donation campaign. Bhagavan saw to it that the entire blood donation process worked with clockwork precision and all left with smile on their faces. Swami's presence could be felt as an unseen hand guiding us through this task. Our sincere thanks to Swami for guiding, helping and providing us with an opportunity to serve the community at large through the noble act of Blood Donation.

### **Seva For Special Needs Children**

In addition to the above, Kuwait Sai Centre conducted seva at a school for disadvantaged children at Hawally in Kuwait. This is a regular monthly occurrence at the school which is a government institution, run by the State of Kuwait. The volunteers interact with the Special Needs children of the school, play with them, as well as sing rhymes to them. These activities help the children to develop their motor skills as well as other faculties apart from providing the volunteers with an opportunity to interact with these children and share their love.

### **The Special Children**

The Special Needs children in the school are affected with problems like cerebral palsy, Autism and Down's Syndrome to name a few. However the children are special in a different way. **They are love personified. They recognize love and spread love.**

They do not have any of the maladies of jealousy, anger, hatred, etc which affect the so-called normal people. The seva provides a wonderful opportunity for self-transformation. Interacting with the children leaves a lasting impact on the volunteers so much so that one starts shedding the acquired afflictions of greed, anger, jealousy, hatred and the cleansing process starts.

### **Orange Beach - Occasion to Rejoice**

As part of Bhagavan's 80th birthday celebrations, a special outing was conducted outside the school at a place called Orange Beach close to the sea. The location provided a change in atmosphere and environs not only for the children but also for the nurses who take care of these children.

A total of fifteen children and eight nurses together with thirty Sai Centre volunteers participated in the seva, which began at 4.00 in the evening and went on till late evening. The volunteers played games with the children and sang rhymes, thus enlivening their spirits. Snacks were distributed to the children, nurses and the volunteers.

### **Sai Inspires**

Swami inspires us and guides us in our attempts to help others. When the intention to serve is honourable and suffused with love, the results are highly rewarding and encouraging.

The children enjoyed the cool breeze and the music and were happy to have an opportunity to get outside the school and spend some time with their nurses and the Sai family. It was a tremendous success and an occasion to remember. There was love and harmony all around and the volunteers also enjoyed themselves.

**Heart2Heart wishes success for further loving sallies in service from our Kuwait brothers and sisters – and yes, let's hear about them as well.**

**- Heart2Heart Team**

## WATER PROJECT FOR ABORIGINALS

### IN TOOMELAH, AUSTRALIA

**Heart2Heart** received an account of wonderful seva in Australia which will have far-reaching and life changing affects on 250 Aboriginal people. The hearts of the Sai Organsiation had gone out to this native community who were suffering from contaminated water. The Toomelah Aboriginal Community is located around 40km from Goondiwindi near the Queensland and New South Wales border, in Australia. Seventy families are living there, including approximately 100 children and their facilities are very basic. Their water supply is from a borehole piped to ground storage tanks. This water is then pumped to an overhead tank and then distributed to the community through a network of pipes.

It was scientifically and independently demonstrated that the Toomelah water was not up to the standards of the Australia Health Regulations for Drinking Water and that it therefore required treatment before drinking. Even the clearest water, with apparently no health risk, can result in a high level of microbiological contamination. Many of the micro-organisms found in the water are pathogenic causing disease in humans. Most susceptible to these illnesses are the young and the elderly. A rubbish site is located 100 metres from the borehole. The pump house and the storage system are not maintained properly. The annual cleaning for the storage tanks have not been carried out in years.

One of the community members, Elder Albert said that Toomelah had been asking for clean drinking water since 1913 but nothing had been done. He said that the main problem is the cotton farming in the region. The bore water is contaminated with chemicals eg. Round-up, insecticides and many other chemicals. He said that the "The chemicals in the bore water makes the youth go *Wooba* (sick). Also the poor water quality and the contamination from the tanks can lead to many illnesses such as depression, skin diseases, cancer, dental problems etc. One of the main illnesses among the youth can be excessive anger and a degree of poor concentration which is caused by the chemicals in the water and many Elders are very sick."

After liaising with the community, the Sai Organisation decided to install a water purification system and 1000 litre storage tank. After extensive organization and procurement of materials the 12 hour installation work was carried out on 4th November 2005.

They told **Heart2Heart** that "On arrival at 2.00pm, the youth unloaded and assembled the shed that will house the Water Purification Plant (WPP). We then had to level the ground to sit the WPP on cement blocks. The team worked to 8.45pm that night. We then retired to the caravan park for supper."

The next morning after Bhajans the team left to complete the installation of the WPP. "We had to divert some plumbing pipes which we had never planned for (Swami's Game)," the Sai volunteers continued, "The young

people, who had no plumbing experience, had to buy some accessories for this diversion, having to go to the town three times for the correct parts. This was indeed a learning experience for them! At about 1.30pm the WPP was installed and filling up.”

### **Aboriginal Water Purification Ceremony**

Elder Roger told the Sai volunteers that he was going to the bush to get some herbs for the opening ceremony of the water purification plant at 4.00pm. Aunty Eda and Elder Roger from the aboriginal community asked the Sai Volunteers to participate in the inaugural Ceremony which they gladly did. This took the form of a smoke ceremony based on Aboriginal traditions. Another community elder, Aunty Ada McGrady, commented that “Many people and organisations come with promises but never come back to carry it out. **But the Sai Organisation is very different and you will always be our friends. Today is a magical day in our lives - at last something good has come to Toomelah!**”

As Aunty Ada drank the water she said that “This is yummy!” She was overwhelmed with excitement and was unsure whether this water purification plant belonged to the community, a Sai Volunteer said. When reassured that this was indeed the case her eyes filled with tears. On behalf of the Elders, Elder Roger asked Jenny and Mr. Pather – two of the organizers - if they could adopt them as Elders in the Goomerai Community. “We kindly accepted this with their blessings,” they said.

The Sai Organisation’s work also came to the attention of the local press which carried this story on Swami’s birthday. An excerpt from the article follows:

“Mr Pather (one of the organizers) said that the main highlight of the project was when the elders adopted he and his wife as members of the community. ‘I was lost for words and it brought a tear to my eye when Aboriginal people take you on’ he said. (The Sai Organisation)...is currently working with 25 indigenous schools in need of improvement and are looking at assisting the Toomelah preschool with a breakfast programme and bringing in their own doctors where need be.” *The Goondiwindi Argus, Nov 23rd 2005*

**Heart2Heart** would like to thank the Sai volunteers for sending in the account of their very important work, which has obviously been inspired by Swami. This same group is also involved in some EHV work with the Aboriginal community and **Heart2Heart** will be carrying an account of this in a later issue. Their website is at [www.aboriginal-torres-strait-saiseva.info](http://www.aboriginal-torres-strait-saiseva.info)

**- Heart2Heart Team.**

## PRASHANTI DIARY

### CHRONICLES OF HEAVEN ON EARTH

The month of January is always special in Puttaparthi. Not only does it usher in the New Year but we see a varied variety of visitors that always thrills us. We not only see the remnants of the visitors from Christmas, but it is the time of the year when the alumni of the Sri Sathya Sai Educational Institutions come "home" to His Lotus Feet - for on the 1st of January every year for the past few years, Bhagavan has graciously permitted the former students to offer a musical programme in His divine presence.

Just a few days later, on the 11th of January we have the Annual Sports and Cultural Meet of the Sri Sathya Sai Educational Institutions that attracts its own crowd - not only of alumni - but also the parents of the current students who come from far-off places to see their wards perform in front of the Lord. And add to this the usual crowd of devotees from all over the world and you get a good idea of the exciting mix of people that congregate here to usher in the New Year.

In this issue we bring you a detailed coverage not only of the New Year's Day celebrations but also the entire Annual Sports and Cultural Meet along with a report on the 2 dramas that were presented by the students as part of the celebrations, and the Valedictory Function of the Sports Meet on January 14th.

#### **January 1st - The New Year's Day Celebrations**

##### **The Morning Programme - The Institute Brass Band and Devotional Songs**

January 1, 2006 - New Year's morning was a joyous occasion for the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning Prashanti Nilayam Campus Brass Band for they were given the opportunity to usher in the New Year with their rousing tunes.

The Sai Kulwant Hall was beautifully decked up for the New Year by the Alumni of the Institute. The Mandir façade had floral wreaths hanging all over, punctuated at regular intervals by tastefully done circular floral bouquets. The pillars directly in front of the veranda had long vertical banners that read – Sri Sathya Sai Students. On the remaining pillars in front of the veranda there were banners wishing all devotees a Happy New Year in English, Telugu, Kannada, Tamil and Hindi.

The SSSIHL Brass band is comprised of 2 flutes, 1 piccolo, 6 clarinets, 3 alto saxophones, 1 tenor sax, 1 baritone sax, 6 trumpets, 4 trombones, 3 euphoniums, 1 sousaphone, 1 tuba, and a percussion section of 4 snare drums, 1 bass drum, and cymbals. These 35 musicians are led by their bandmaster, bringing to 36 the total number of band members.

After Swami had entered Sai Kulwant Hall about 9:20 in the morning and had given His benedictory New Year *Darshan* to the assembled multitudes, Swami called up to His chair the band master and also the leader of the trumpet section. They presented Swami with a beautiful card painted by the members of the band. Swami then gave the band His Divine Blessing to start the morning programme. Music stands immediately rose into place, musicians stood up to take their places and the Institute Band was immediately ready to begin its 20-minute programme of seven pieces.

The band greeted our beloved Swami with the powerful *Breadfan*, a salute piece with energetic drive and a strong rock beat provided by the percussion section. *Hungarian No.2* played next, conveyed the valor fearlessness and the joy of being Sai Soldiers. The earliest work on the programme, a piece composed over 200 years ago, was a band arrangement of the much loved 1st movement of *Symphony No. 40* by Mozart. The trombones and euphoniums play the driving rhythmic sounds played by the violas in the original symphony orchestra version. Fourth on the programme was the *bhajan - Shankara*.

The low brass played the open sounding chords expressing the awesome power of Shiva, while the upper range instruments played the *bhajan* melody. A favorite piece of the Institute boys is *Adagio*, which was played next. The soulful music conveys love and adoration for our dear Lord Sai. This piece is also often heard at the grounds during the Annual January 11 Sports Meet. The swinging *New York, New York* overflows with upbeat enthusiasm and cheerful freshness. To bring the New Years musical offering to a close, the band played *La Bamba*. This is Latin American dance music. Its energy was contagious and got the seated devotees swaying on their cushions. At the conclusion of their programme the musicians take a deep bow, silently expressing their eternal gratitude to Bhagavan for giving them this blessed opportunity to perform a concert in the Divine Presence.

After this it was the time for some devotional music sung by the Institute students. Current students Sri Om Prasad and Sri Guru Prasad sang the first haunting song *Sai Nam Sumiran* that fittingly elevated the pensive devotional mood. Moving on to the song *Brahmam Okkate*, 'God is one' - the quintessential message of all religions that is driven home by these words written by the saint Annamaya. This song was well sung by Sri Ashwath Narayan and Sri Prabhakar. The final song of the trilogy that comprised their presentation for the morning was *Sri Ram Ji Ki Mahima* - the Glory of Sri Rama - again sung by Om Prasad and Guru Prasad. The musical talent among the boys is prodigious for their dulcet tones and they were ably backed by the sounds of the keyboards, the tabla and *Naal*, a percussion instrument.

After this *prasadam* was distributed and the *arathi* was performed. On His way back to Poornachandra Swami graciously cut the New Year cakes lovingly prepared for Him by the High School boys.

## **The Evening Programme Of Music By The Institute Alumni**

*We Love You Sai* was an offering of devotional songs at Bhagavan's Lotus Feet by the former men students of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning (SSSIHL) on the evening of the New Year Day.

This year about 300 former students (alumni) congregated from not only from all the distant parts of India but also from all around the world. Boys had come from countries like the USA, Canada, Russia, England, Australia, Spain, Saudi Arabia, and the U.A.E., Kuwait and Nepal and a few other countries.

It was not just a mere reunion. The boys did some *seva* in the form of holding a medical camp to benefit the poor villagers of the area. This year they conducted the Medical Camp in the Gorantla Mandal – about 44 kms. from Puttaparthi. The *Grama Seva* involved about 5 villages and over 1600 patients and 2000 cattle benefited from it. Over 50 devotee doctors and veterinarians who came from Visakhapatnam served continuously for about 10 hours to diagnose the patients and dispense medicines. *Narayana Seva* was also done as part of the *Grama Seva* and over 3000 villagers were fed sumptuously. A detailed interactive session was held to educate the villagers on various common diseases and precautions to be taken for their own safety. The *Grama Seva* concluded with a *Nagara Sankeerthan*, congregational singing of the Lord's glories through the streets of the village.

In the evening all the "old boys" gathered in Sai Kulwant Hall for the New Year musical offering. After Swami entered the Hall, He sat for a long time listening to the Veda chanting, initially "ignoring" all these alumni seated expectantly before the Lord. After 15 minutes had turned to 30 minutes and then to 45 minutes and the Lord had still not "acknowledged" the presence of the alumni, one hand after another were joined together in prayer, a prayer earnestly recited from the heart, for the Lord to grace them with His permission and let them perform in front of Him. What abject lessons that we should never take the Lord for granted, but always pray to Him, in all the circumstances of life!

Finally after an hour the Lord gave the much awaited signal and a bunch of alumni immediately scooted up to Him to seek His permission and blessing before they started the evening's programme. Swami also graciously released Volumes 7 and 8 of the *bhajan* CDs by the former students entitled *A Bridge Across Time*. Please see below for more details on this story.

### **A Bridge Across Time**

With the main objective of offering their love and talents back to the Lotus Feet and also to introduce the right way of singing the *bhajans*, the former students of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning (SSSIHL) embarked on the project of making Sathya Sai Bhajan CDs and Cassettes.

Accordingly, since 2003 the musically talented former students have been bringing out two (2) volumes every year under the title "A Bridge Across Time", which incidentally had been recorded at the Prashanti Digital Studio,

Prashanthi Nilayam. Bhagavan too has been very graciously appreciating their good efforts and releasing the CDs and Cassettes on the 1st of January every year.

After Bhagavan releases the CDs and Cassettes, the Master Copies and the Copyrights of the same are donated to the Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications Trust (SSSBPT). The trust in turn puts them up for sale in the book store. The proceeds of the sale of CDs and Cassettes go to the trust and this serves as a humble and small offering made by the former students to Bhagavan's glorious and grand mission.

Having received an opportunity of a lifetime to sing before the Lord, the students made the best use of the occasion as they poured their love and hearts out at Bhagavan's Lotus Feet. Presenting a string of ten songs, the students started their programme with a group song especially composed for the occasion which goes, "Om Sai Om Sai Om Sai Om Sai, We all have come to say we love you Sai....." This was a multi-lingual, fast paced number, and with every one singing in chorus, it brought out everyone's innermost feelings for Bhagavan.

Then a collage of soul stirring, emotion filled and melodious songs followed for one hour in different languages praising the Lord's many forms and *leelas*. With many singers present, each song was sung by 2 singers so that every singer could get the opportunity to offer their gratitude to Bhagavan personally. To avoid monotony, the songs were carefully and appropriately punctuated with simple poems composed in Telugu, reminiscing nostalgic moments of the students' love for Bhagavan.

The boys followed up their opening composition with a Telugu song entitled *Sainatha Bhagavan* sung by Shyam Sundar and Sriram. This was followed by *Pala Kadali PaiPavalinche* sung by A.V.Prasad and L.N. Kote. A Hindi song *Tum Se Acha Kaun Hai* (There is no-one better than You) by Vishal and Sonum was next. Hariharan and Vasudevan then sang the Tamil song *Pullangulal*, followed by Jayadev and Sai Kishore singing the Telugu song *Karunabla*. This was followed by 2 more Telugu songs – *Jagadabhi RamaRaghukula Soma* (sung by Kota and Subha Rao) and *Naa Sai Nanu CheraRadaye* (Sung by Vijaya Sai and Swamy). The ninth song was again a Hindi song - *Shiva Shambho*, sung by Santosh Pai and Anupam. For the last song they again sang their opening composition "Om Sai, Om Sai ...." in a fuller version to a rousing beat to bring their prepared programme to a close.

The eminently gifted musicians were ably supported by an equally talented group of instrumentalists that made the concert a very memorable evening. There were 2 key-boards (Hariharan and Darshan Kulkarni) and 2 guitars (played by Anupam and Vishal).

On the flute was Ravi Teja accompanied by Balasubramaniam on the violin. Other accompanying instruments were the sweets sounds of the *veena* (played by Dr. Sridharan) and the harmonium (by Dr. Sonum). The percussion instruments were the *tabla* and the *dholak* (played by Sunil Narang, Rajagopal

and Subhasish Daw). Swami asked the alumni boys to continue by singing *bhajans* and they responded magnificently leading the crowd in rendering for their Lord soul touching *bhajans* for over a half-hour.

A beautiful passing smile on Bhagavan's face remained as a befitting reward for all to cherish in the end. And there is more! As if to confirm His happiness, Bhagavan granted the former students an opportunity to sing *bhajans* again in the *mandir* on the evening of the 2nd of January.

### **January 11th -The Annual Sports And Cultural Meet**

The Annual Sports and Cultural Meet is the first major festival event after the New Year is ushered in and is held on the 11th of January every year. It is a joyous occasion as the students of all the three campuses of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, the Higher Secondary and also the Primary School students all come together in Prashanti Nilayam and perform cultural activities before the Lord.

The Annual Sports and Cultural Meet occupies an important place in the Institute Curriculum and its goal of an integrated system of education. This was well highlighted by the Vice-Chancellor Sri Anil Gokak in his speech at the Valedictory function on January 14th when he said,

*"The Annual Sports and Cultural Meet is an important component of our educational system. It shows that our's is an integral system of education which gives equal importance to the physical, mental and spiritual development of the student. The importance that is attached to the healthy development of the body is indicated by the manner in which the sports are organized. The development of the human body is a prerequisite for the development of a healthy human mind. That is the philosophy of Bhagavan Baba.*

*This apart, the participation in sports adds to your other skills and qualities. It develops in you the qualities of perseverance, tenacity and courage. And above all, the skill to take appropriate decisions and actions in an emergency. The harmony of thought, word and deed is the prerequisite of a spiritual citizen and is assured by proper attention to the physical body.*

*Let us recapitulate the oath that was administered to you on the Sports Day. There was a reference to fair competition, the honour of our country and the glory of sport and above all love for our beloved Mother Sai. In other words, human values and sports are woven together in our system of education. If only these were applied to the rules of everyday life: fair competition, brotherly love, learning how to win graciously and to lose with a smile on your face, things would be different in the country ."*

The name is rather confusing to bystanders as the Sports part is usually completed much prior to January 11th, for on that day the boys present only "cultural" items. The Sports aspect of the meet usually starts early in November and the boys compete in intra-mural sports like basketball,

volleyball, cricket, tennis, shot put, javelin and hammer-throw and other competitive items.

There are also athletic events like 100m, 400m, 1500m, and the 10,000m, races as well as items like the long jump, and the high jump. There are also other competitions like photography, music – vocal and instrumental, public speaking, debate, vedam recital – individual, pair and group, orchestra, mono acting, drama, collage making, sketching and painting competition and others to encourage the fine arts.

But from the middle of December thoughts turn to the cultural items that they will perform in front of the Lord. A lot of work goes in, and the faculty and staff are fully involved. For not only have the items to be developed but also the related uniforms have to be stitched and other props like the huge back-drop have to be completed for this oversize gala festival that will be held in the sprawling Vidya Giri Stadium.

Swami on His part always gets involved in His own way with numerous visits to the Stadium. He also has discussions with the Vice-Chancellor and other concerned faculty members in Sai Kulwant Hall during the run-up to the Sports Festival and always gives His divine guidance and blessing to almost every aspect of the Meet.

This year Swami first visited the ground on both the morning and the evening of the 4th of January. On both these visits He did not get down from the car but saw the events that the boys displayed to Him from inside the car itself. On the morning of the 5th, however, He got down from the car and spent an entire hour reviewing the Sport events prepared by the Prashanti Nilayam campus.

On the evening of the 6th the students of the Brindavan campus as well as the Anantapur campus arrived in Prashanti Nilayam. From the morning of the 7th, there was a combined all campus march-past practice every morning and a schedule was drawn up allotting time for each of the individual campuses in the Stadium to fine-tune their events for the big day.

On the morning of the 9th, Swami again visited the ground and stayed there reviewing the all campus march-past as well as the rehearsal for the flag hoisting ceremony. He also blessed the mascot - a peacock- for this year's games. The mascot carries the flame up the hill and lights the urn that will stay lit for the duration of the day's events. Swami also paid a visit to the grounds on the evening of the 10th, just prior to the event, encouraging everyone by His presence.

### **The Morning Programme By The Parthi And Anantapur Campuses**

Finally the all-important day dawned. The galleries started filling up early. The day was cool and clear. The entire stadium was decorated with flags and balloons as befitting the occasion. The marching bands that were to escort Swami into the Stadium were gathered in the North end, awaiting His car.

Swami made His entry at 8:00 AM sharp and was escorted into the stadium by the motorcycle riders and the marching bands of the educational institutions. Just after the marching bands were the Lions of Prashanti Nilayam. The Lions were part of the Lion Dance routine that was prepared by the Puttaparthi boys as part of their cultural programme for this day.

After lighting the lamp to signal the start of the Games, Swami took His Chair at the center of the stage. Then six tiny tots - three boys and three girls - from the Primary School welcomed Him with bouquets and cards.

### **The All Campus March-Past**

Around 8.30 a.m. the March Past began. The squads looked disciplined and colourful with the Primary School leading the way followed in turn by the girls of the Anantapur Campus of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning and the Anantapur Junior College.

After the girls came the boys of the Higher Secondary School in their bright T-shirts and finally the men of the Brindavan campus. The hosts - the Parthi students - brought up the rear. The Athletic squad medal winners were the last squad to enter the field.

Each of these squads when they passed the stage saluted the Chancellor before turning left and entering the ground. After all the squads had assembled in the ground, the Institute flag was ceremoniously brought in by the boys of the High School, which was tied to the pole by the Physical Directors of the men's campus.

Swami then pressed a remote button to hoist the flag and the Annual Sports and games were well underway, after the oath was administered to all the athletes by the Institute Captain. Swami then lit the torch and two athletes carried it to the base of the hill, where it was hoisted to the hilltop along with the peacock mascot through wires. Once it reached the top, the fire was used to light the main urn that burned brightly at its highest point. Swami also released doves and balloons to signal the start of the games.

### **The Parthi Campus Programme**

Then the Parthi students began their show. Generally a huge back-drop is created and the items are presented in the fore-ground. This year the Parthi students made a grand entry with a huge hexagonal shaped *stupa* (pillar) with Duty, Devotion, Discipline, Purity, Patience, and Perseverance written on its six sides. Right at the top was a swan around whose neck was a disc with the number 25 (white against a dark blue back-ground) to mark the Silver Jubilee of the Institute (which was opened in 1981).

On either sides of this hexagonal pillar were numerous cut-outs with Swami's photographs on them. Two bright red banners with the words THE END OF EDUCATION IS CHARACTER and THE END OF KNOWLEDGE IS WISDOM formed a fitting back-drop. Between all these were giant models – 15 feet high

and around 15 kgs. in weight - of 'Sai Students' dressed up either as Vedam chanting students, or in whites and some models were dressed as medical and legal professionals, and some were in a graduation robe. These models were specially designed and built for this occasion with the help of professionals from Mangalore and the uniqueness of these moving statues was that they were very light in weight and a single student could easily lift a model on his head and move around.

After they all took their position, the Opening Ceremony song began. Groups of students danced to the tune depicting a mix of the East and the West, symbolizing a blend of spiritual and secular knowledge that is the hallmark of the Institute.

The second item was one of the main items - the Lion Dance. 30 "lions" barged into the ground dancing vigorously and exhibited a number of stunts on tables, poles and even did bamboo walking. Each lion was made up of two boys and they had to show an extra-ordinary sense of balance, co-ordination and strength to execute the different difficult items.

The next item was a display of Rhythm on Poles done by the High School students, followed by another eye-catching item – the Giant Wheels. Two Giant Wheels, 35 feet in height were mounted just in front of the ladies gallery to the left of the stage. Students performed wonderful feats and yoga *asanas* on these revolving wheels.

Subsequently came the Gymnasts displaying their mettle, performing all types of jumps – over fire, through rings and finally even over a Maruti Van! Following this were the drummers playing their rhythmic beats on 25 Chinese drums that were specially flown in from Singapore for this event. The Delta Force came next to display their machismo. They held very heavy logs of wood and went through synchronized exercises, thus demonstrating that with unity even heavy weights are made very light. For the finale the real tough guys climbed upon the logs held vertically by the others.

Acrobatics by the School children was the next item. Aeons ago, it is said, Lord Nataraja passed the knowledge of the Yogasanas to Mother Parvati through his beautiful dances, which eventually and ultimately was bequeathed to man, he being part of the *Prakriti* (nature) that the loving Mother Symbolises. This was the very theme of the item put up by the students from the Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School with the nomenclature TRANS DIMENSIONS. The fact that the age old Yogasanas had survived the tumults and ebbs of time was proclaimed aloud by the students driving out all the vexations doubts from the minds of people about our culture & heritage.

The item commenced with a dance from Lord Shiva implying the afore cited cause after which the 40 or odd students (dressed in coordinated blues) started performing various *asanas* harmonizing their body movements to the beautiful, resounding symphony of music. *Nataragasana*, *Vrikshasana*, *Bakasana*, *Sarvangasana* and the fabulous *Sheershasana* are just a few to

name, and of course, the performance of the tough *Vrshihikasana* (i.e. touching the head with toes while in handstand) on a rotating platform.

The final item of the Prashanti Nilayam campus was a Fun on the Run game involving a number of competitive games between two teams. Shooting balloons with catapults, putting balls through the basketball hoop after running through an obstacle course, a pyramid formation and so on. Based on the German games known as 'Tele-match', in this two teams - 'The Red Dolphins' and 'The Yellow Reindeers' - venture out in to the field.

Kick starting their games was the balloon race. In this, the players had to make a dash to a pillar and catapult a balloon a top the pillar and than carry the pillar back and raise a flag to signal their finish. However, the highlight of this show was the obstacle race. The players were handed basket balls and after skillfully maneuvering their way through a chain of obstacles, one had to shoot a basket. There was a jackpot too – if you score a five pointer.

Other events included the 'Prasanthi Wheels', where a couple of players from each team have to ride a seven feet wheel. Then, we had the human pyramid formation - "United we stand, Divided we fall" seemed to be the foundation of this structure. The presentation came to a close with all the staff and students coming into a closing ceremony formation with a special closing song being played in the background.

### **The Anantapur Campus Programme**

At 10.00 a.m., the Anantapur students began their presentation. The theme of their presentation was Unity-Purity-Divinity. They began with an introductory dance followed by wonderful, breathtaking Yoga asanas performed atop moving Jeeps. There were a number of jeeps and the girls used a number of props like a rotating wheel and bamboo poles to display various items that won them applause from the crowd.

Following this was a butterfly dance - a mass item with a hundred plus girls with butterfly wings that turned shining silver and bright gold as they changed sides. The formation was maintained immacutely and the movements synchronized perfectly to give a good visual treat to the audience. After this, there was another mass dance item using hoops covered with shining pink material. By 10.25 a.m. they concluded their very crisp and gripping presentation with a Closing Ceremony wherein all the Anantapur students gathered in front of the stage and sang with devotion for the Lord.

### **The Evening Programme By The Primary School And The Brindavan Campus**

The afternoon programme started around 4:00 PM when Swami's car was escorted into the stadium by motorcycle riders. As Bhagavan's car approached the dais, the Primary School gymnasts in orange suits welcomed Swami by a "crawl" on their hands in tandem.

Thus one crawled on his hands and formed the rear end with his legs wrapped around the waist of the boy in the front who was on all fours. After Swami had ascended the dais, two tiny Primary School girls decked in green and two little boys in yellow marched across the grounds to offer their bouquets and cards to Bhagavan. After Swami received their offerings, the presentation began with a welcome dance by the girls to the song – *Prashanti Vaasa Swagatam, Puttaparathi Purusha Swagatam, Suswaagatam....*

### **The Primary School Presentation**

The primary School had made an impressive back-drop for the first song. A huge long painting spanning almost the entire width of the field that showed a lot of *vanaras* (monkeys) helping Lord Rama build the stone bridge to Lanka to rescue Mother Sita.

This formed a fitting back-drop for the first item wherein over a hundred boys dressed as *vanaras* danced to a fast beat. As the song progresses, it unfolds the story of Lord Rama and Lakshmana who had come to rescue Mother Sita and the monkeys helping them build the bridge across the sea to Lanka. Then it was the turn of the very young gymnasts to display their talent. 28 boys drawn from the 5th, 6th and the 7th classes trained for about 25 days to put up a creditable display of gymnastics. They did intricate formations and pyramids that had the crowd clapping in glee.

A feature of the primary school items is the involvement of almost the entire school in one item or the other. The girls of the school normally do an intricate dance and this year was no exception. A clutch of girls dressed in a blue skirt and a white top with a transparent cover around them like unfolded wings interspersed with other girls dressed in a white *shalwar kameez* outfit and draped with a red shawl holding hoops.

The young girls kept the beat and formation well and the entire dance was well executed, with the hoops going up and down in a synchronized fashion forming "waves" that were pleasing to the eye. While the dance item was going on in the background, a bunch of 33 skater kids dressed in red took their positions just to the left of the dais. As the dance was winding down, these young boys went into their routine doing cartwheels on roller skates, making formations and jumping off a ramp and clearing their brothers lying on the ground and other such feats that won the hearts of all.

Next item on the primary school agenda was a pole drill by about 87 boys from the 5th, 6th and the 7th class. There were three vertical poles of different heights erected on the ground and the boys did pole climbing feats requiring body strength and dexterity. It was a very creditable display considering that they had trained for just 14 days for this item.

There was a flower dance next involving some of the bigger girls. At the conclusion of the flower dance, about 25 boys of the 5th, 6th and 7th class did some rope tricks on the 2 ropes hanging from a height in front of the dais. It

the conclusion of their programme, the entire primary school stood in front of the dais and offered their *pranaams* to Swami.

### **Presentation By The Deenajanodharana Campus**

Next on the agenda, the children of the *Deenajanodarana Pathakam* (the orphanage opened by Swami) made a brief 15 minute presentation as a dance drama of the perennial fight between good and evil with the good forces decked in white and the bad guys in black.

The battlefield was imaginatively represented as a chessboard and the different forces were done up as chess pieces. Indeed these boys have come such a long way in just 3 years that they compete well with the best of the other campuses and more than hold their own.

### **The Brindavan Campus Presentation**

It was quite late almost 5.35 p.m. when the Brindavan students commenced their presentation. The Brindavan campus offered at the Lotus Feet, a fusion of courage coupled with drama, strength supported by skill and beauty blended with agility.

The opening item was the dragon dance an exotic display of colour and grandeur from China. Since time immemorial the Chinese have revered the dragon as a symbol of power, honour, strength and prosperity. The dragon is in pursuit of the pearl. It represents humanity which tries to satiate its eternal hunger by seeking the pearl which symbolises wisdom and happiness. The dragon teaches us to overcome all difficulties and ceaselessly aim to attain the Supreme Goal. Following the dragon dance was a pageant presenting a variety of martial art forms from around the world in a display that raises combat into an art and action into perfection.

The martial arts were displayed as combat between warriors. The first combat was between two warriors using the *Toufa*, a rice grinding tool as a powerful weapon of self-defence. On the other side there was a display of the use of *Otta*, a short curved stick designed to paralyze the opponent, and a spear was pitted against the sword. A third combat displayed how the key to success in any combat is the art of reading the mind of the opponent. 2 students deftly wield the *Kettukari* (quarter staff) although being outnumbered and emerge victorious. There was also a display of the use of the mace, made famous by Bhima in the Mahabharatha war. The mace needs more than brute strength, as its wielder must have an agile body and a sharp mind.

There was also a display of the Oriental Martial Art, which is a synergy of technique that empowers the body and elevates the mind. *Katas* are a predefined set of movements which form the building blocks of karate. The boys displayed the *Kata Taikuku shodan*, and followed it up with the more advanced *Kata Hian Idan*. After all, eliminating weak and indecisive movements in Karate helps to eliminate weakness and indecisions in the mind. The *Nunchaku* is essentially a 2 section cudgel joined by a short chain.

The whirling *nunchaku* can generate a whopping force of 400 lbs/sq inch and is considered the most dangerous blunt weapon in the world. The *Ninjutsu* warriors performed the double *nunchaku* blindfolded that had the audience enthralled.

The boys then displayed some breaking techniques in karate. Karate, after all, is all about generation of power in the region of interest. The tremendous focus of power attained in rigorous training is used by the students to shatter stone slabs at a fiery temperature. Six athletes also attempted to kick a football suspended about 9 feet in the air. This item required a lot of flexibility and suppleness and was originally a form of celebration. It was close to 6 PM. that all the Brindavan students came forward towards the dais and offered their gratitude to Bhagawan. Thus the curtain closed on this year's Annual Sports and Cultural Meet.

### **Jan 13th - A Violin Recital And A Drama By The Primary School**

On the 13th of January, at Swami's request, the Primary School re-staged a drama that was first staged earlier on October 23rd, 2005 during the Festival of Joy as we had also reported in our Dec 1st, 2005 issue. Swami had come early to Sai Kulwant Hall. However, the primary school drama that was scheduled to be staged that afternoon had a component where Swami's video was projected on a large screen that formed a back-drop for the drama in the front. So the kind and compassionate Lord had the *bhajans* conducted first, thus ensuring that the Sun went down and provided the right ambience for the Primary School kids to begin their drama.

A violin recital by the Primary School girls preceded the drama by the Primary School boys.

### **The Violin Recital By The Primary School Girls**

About 38 girls from classes 6th to 11th of the Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School gave a beautiful violin concert consisting of 5 songs. They first played 3 Scottish and 1 American folk dance songs. For the last piece they played the popular *bhajan* - *Madana Mohana*. This effort was quite creditable since they learned all the songs in a short period of just 2-3 weeks.

### **The Primary School Drama - Sai Prema Dhara**

After the violin recital, a trio of primary school kids welcomed Swami with bouquets and obtained His blessings to start their programme. It was late in the evening, just a little after 6 PM that the play titled "Sai Prema Dhara" or Stream of Sai's Love began.

Basically it was a neatly interwoven mixture of events from Swami's childhood and His myriad social service projects presented in a number of appealing ways. The large screen back-drop was used to a very telling effect to introduce the characters like Lord Ganesha and Lord Subramanyam before they appear on the stage in front of the screen.

Eminent devotees like Sri Kasturi and Sri John Hislop were used as raconteurs who introduced the events and narrated a commentary to telling effect as the events unfolded. The childhood events were very heart warming for it showed the little kid Sathya getting fruits out of season for his playmates; little Sathya showing the cosmos in His open mouth to Subamma was also portrayed while drawing a comparison to Lord Krishna doing the same by showing the cosmos to His mother Yasoda.

Other incidents portrayed were the one in which the village boys carried Sathya on a palanquin calling Him their guru, the story of the sacrifices that Sathya made to attend the scout camp and the service activities carried out by Him and His playmates, and the famous incident at the Virupaksha temple in Hampi where Sathya stood outside to look after the luggage but was also simultaneously seen inside the sanctum sanctorum as the deity of the temple.

Another unique feature in the drama was that great saints like Meerabhai and Thyagaraja, glorified our Lord. In keeping with the title of the play "Sai Prema Dhaara", or the Stream of Sai's Love, the musical play continued on to show the beneficial effects of Sai's social projects (education, water, health) on the people. The social projects were very well depicted with video clippings showing the projects in the background while there was usually a celebration through dance of the happiness of the beneficiaries - the people - in the foreground. The finale of the drama was very interesting wherein the students dressed in whites are seen asking relevant and appropriate questions in the foreground and Swami seems to answer the questions (the "answers" are actually video clips from a number of Swami's discourses) through the projector screen in the back-ground.

The play concluded with all the children gathering together in front of Swami and singing the song *Madhura Mohana Ghana Shyama Sundara Sai.....* Swami was very happy and materialized a chain which He put around the neck of the boy who acted as Prof. Kasturi. He also materialized a ring for a student who acted as one of the young Sai Babas in the play. There were actually 3 Sai Babas in the play to depict Swami at different ages. The well rehearsed play by the little ones, the catchy costumes, the melodious tunes, the fast paced rendition and of course the engaging primary school kids made this a very memorable occasion. Swami gave group photographs to all the participants and filled their cups of joy to the full. It was late, almost 7.30 p.m. when Swami took *arati* and retired to His residence in Poornachandra.

### **Jan 14th - The Valedictory Function In The Morning And A Brindavan Campus Drama In The Evening**

After the Sports events finishes on January 11th, the prize distribution and valedictory function is held on January 14th. January 14th is also a significant harvest festival called *Makarasantrathi* (also called as Pongal) that is celebrated all over India .

### **The Morning Programme**

Speaking on the occasion of the Valedictory function of the Sports Meet, the Vice Chancellor alluded to the importance of this festival and said,

*"Today is Makara Shankranthi, which is indeed auspicious as it heralds the arrival of a new spirit and it is, especially for those in the North, the culmination of winter and there bonfires are lit, sweets are given out, puffed rice is thrown into the fire and the festival is celebrated in a very joyous atmosphere. In some parts of the country sesame seeds are consumed in various forms. The idea is that sins will be washed away by this act of purification.*

*Uttarayana is associated with Makara Shankranthi because the Sun enters Makara Rashi Uttarayana and I hardly need recapitulate the story of Bhisma which is intimately connected with Uttarayana. Bhisma who led the army of the Kauravavs and was lying on a bed of arrows until the tenth day did not want to go to the heavens during Dakshinayana - he wanted to wait until Uttarayana. And therefore he prayed to Krishna who rushed to his bedside. It was only after worshipping Krishna that Bhisma breathed his last. The belief was that if you do not breathe your last during Uttarayana you may still be subjected to the agony of the cycle of birth and death. "*

After this brief speech by the Vice Chancellor, in a marked departure from the usual custom, Swami requested that the table be brought up in front as He wanted to give His divine discourse. In the course of His Divine Discourse where He asked everyone to discharge his duties with a sense of surrender to God, Swami said,

*"It is said Daivam manusha rupena (God incarnates in the form of a human being). That is why human birth is considered to be highly sacred. God incarnates in human form to redeem mankind. Do not be under the mistaken notion that God is confined to a specific form. Divinity is not a separate entity. It is immanent in humanity.*

*One must make a distinction between education and educare. Whereas education is information-oriented, educare is transformation-oriented. Educare is related to our inner feelings and purity of heart. Our Maata, Paata and Baata (speech, song and way of life) should originate from the heart. That is the essence of educare.*

*You should think of God always. Your heart is the temple of God. Hence, fill your heart with love. You may do japa or tapa, but if you lack purity of heart, all your spiritual practices will prove futile. Whatever may be the practice you undertake, you should always focus your mind on the Atma only.*

*Manishi (man) is one who is endowed with manas (mind). Manishi is also known as manava. What is the inner meaning of this term? 'Ma' means maya (ignorance), 'na' means nasthi (without) and 'va' means varthinchuta (to conduct oneself). A human being is one who overcomes maya and conducts himself without ignorance. Education is meant to help you overcome delusion.*

*One should strive to attain the state of 'die' mind (annihilation of the mind). It is possible only by contemplating on God incessantly.*

*One should have single-minded devotion towards God. Your faith should be total and unconditional. If your faith is unsteady with 'bumps and jumps', you will be confused and will become restless. Keep your desires under control. Limitless desires will take you away from divinity. Annihilation of desires will lead you to the principle of unity. If you want to attain God, there should be harmony in your thoughts, words and deeds. You should also put into practice what you speak and experience divinity. You may be able to attract people with powerful speech, but what is the use if you do not translate your words into action.*

*Today is Sankranti, which marks the commencement of Uttarayana, the auspicious and sacred time. At least from today onwards, develop noble feelings. Follow the sacred path. Then your future will certainly be safe and secure. I hope I am not causing inconvenience to you by speaking at length. When I see all of you, My heart overflows with ananda (bliss). Happiness lies in union with God. Hence contemplate on God incessantly. Never give scope for anxiety or worry. Have faith in God. Do your duty and face any situation with courage. Then, the result is bound to be good. Love is everything. Love is God. Live in love ."*

After the Divine Discourse, Swami next distributed the championship cups to the House winners of the Brindavan, Puttaparthi, Anantapur, the High School, the Music College and the Primary School campuses. He also blessed and handed over the certificates to the winners of all the different games to the principals of the colleges so that they could be distributed later to all the winners in a function held in their respective hostels. After this programme was over, Swami stayed in Sai Kulwant Hall till *prasadam* was distributed to all before retiring to His abode.

### **Adikavi Valmiki - A drama by the Brindavan Students**

The students of Bhagavan from the Brindavan campus were blessed with an opportunity to stage a drama entitled 'Adikavi Valmiki' on January 12th in the Institute Auditorium and again on the evening of January 14th in front of the assembled crowd in Sai Kulwant Hall.

The drama was staged in 2 levels - one part with dialogues and songs mostly in the foreground with the stage at the ground level and the other (mostly) miming the scenes in the background on a higher level stage about 5 feet above the ground. This arrangement coupled with effective sets, attractive costumes and exhilarating music and dance kept the audience enthralled for an entire hour.

The display began with a *sloka* on Sage Valmiki, followed by a precise and brief introduction by the two *sutradhaaras* (raconteurs). The first act, that begins dramatically with the entry of the *Saptharishis* (seven seers) was set to the song *Daivam maanava*, and portrays the tale of how Ratnakara, a forest

brigand is transformed to the sage Valmiki. The sages advise Ratnakara to see if his family would also share the sins that he commits through the robbery that he resorts to in order to feed his family. When his wife refuses to share the sins, Ratnakara is shocked and spends years meditating on the name of Rama and is transformed to the sage Valmiki. The sweet and melodious song *O Ramaneenaama* is sung to glorify the transformation of Ratnakara into Valmiki.

A second commentary by the *sutradaaras* introduces the story of the act wherein the sage Narada and then Lord Brahma inspire the sage Valmiki (formerly Ratnakara) to write the story of the Ramayana to the background sounds of the song *Rama Rama Raama Sita*. The song *Narayanathe namo* is used for Narada's entry scene and *Jagadabhi Ramudu* for Narada's exit. An interesting interlude was a hunter's scene wherein Valmiki witnesses a hunter killing a *krauncha* bird and in his anger the sloka *Maa nishaada pratishtam* bursts out involuntarily, prompted by the divine will.

The third act which forms the cream of the drama evolves the story further. It depicts the part where Valmiki teaches Lava and Kusha (the sons of Lord Rama and Mother Sita) the significance of the Ramayana. The two of them then sing the story of the epic - the very popular *Ramakatha* - while the corresponding scenes of the Ramayana story are enacted on the raised stage in the back.

Important events from the Ramayana from the birth, marriage, exile, Sita's abduction, Hanuman as Rama's messenger to Sita in Lanka, the end of Ravana, the *Agni Pariksha* of Sita (the test by fire) till Rama's *Pattabhisekham* (coronation) were magnificently displayed by the students donning authentic *puranic* costumes while the sweet *Ramakatha* song was sung by the students. The drama concluded after the portrayal of the coronation with a wonderful feet-stepping dance praising Lord Rama as our Bhagavan in this age - *Ramayye Rajayyanata*.

This drama was initially presented to Swami and the student community on 12th January 2006 in the Institute Auditorium. At the conclusion of the drama, Swami was extremely happy and said, "*Boys have done extremely well. It was a feast for the eyes, ears and the heart (Nayananandam, Shravananandam, and Hridayanandam)*).

*I am very happy. Everybody here, including your Vice-Chancellors, is very happy. This should be put up in the big hall (Sai Kulwant Hall). I will give you photos on that day"*. Swami kept on repeating that it was very good.

Consequently, the drama was reenacted again in Sai Kulwant Hall on the evening of the 14th for the benefit of the devotees. Though it was late when the drama ended, Swami kept His promise to the students and posed for the coveted pictures as the students came up to Him in groups.

Thus ends one more memorable *Sankaranthi* and one more Annual Sports meet. It was a fitting finale - a great swansong for the year that was and a harbinger of hope for the year that was just born.

As perhaps most of you know, Swami left for Brindavan on January 20th, 2006. Most of the major functions and events when He is in Brindavan will be covered for you in our next issue.

So till we meet again on March 1st, we wish you the very best.

Jai Sai Ram!

**- Heart2Heart Team**

## SWAMI AND ME

### SWEET MEMORIES

**By Sri K. Suresh - a Former Student of Swami's Institute**

It was a serene evening in the Mandir during the rainy season of 1990. Swami had completed His usual Darshan rounds and had called some devotees for interview. All the students were eagerly waiting for Swami to come out and spend some time with them. They were surprised by the sudden brush of a cool breeze that heralded soothing showers.

It was the time when the Sai Kulwant Hall had not yet been built. To those directly exposed to the scalding rays of the sun, the rain was a welcome relief. To the students it meant a blanket permit to rush forward and occupy the front portico of the Mandir. It was a vantage spot as it gave us the advantage to be very close to the interview room door so that when Swami came out, His gaze in our direction was guaranteed. I was then in my second year of the MBA programme. Along with another brother of mine I was blessed to secure a strategic spot in the front portico. From here we had a clear view of Swami's throne in the Bhajan Hall.

As the rain persisted without any respite, I began reading a book on Swami's miracles in Africa. I was particularly drawn to an incident where two of the devotees who were driving a car on an express way at speeds over 110 km/h suddenly met with an accident. Their car was thrown out of the express way and into the bushes. The car was totally smashed and there was no chance that its occupants would survive such a crash. The devotees in the car however had taken the Lord's Name on their lips at the critical juncture and had escaped unscathed. They were nonplussed and thanked Swami for His Omnipresence. I was quite overwhelmed by this incident and happened to share it with the brother beside me. I couldn't but help remark – 'Look Swami is in Africa also'.

#### **African Avathar**

Some moments later the interview room door opened. Swami came out and stood on the upper portico of the *verandahh* in the Mandir. He paused and looked at me and my brother for a few seconds. I looked at Swami with reverence. Suddenly Swami asked the students sitting in front of me to make way. A path was made for Swami in the tightly packed *verandahh*. Before I could realise Swami walked straight up to me and then paused. Gazing into my eyes He remarked – "*Dunnapotha!* You are talking in the verandah."

Then after a small pause He continued, "**I am here. I am in Africa. I am everywhere.**" Saying this, He walked away with a nonchalant gait. Do I have to say anymore?

Six years later while I was in search for a job, a Singapore based multinational company hired me and sent me on my first assignment to guess where: West

Africa ! It has been six sweet years in Africa. I have been blessed to get involved in the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation here as an office bearer. I try to serve the Lord in my own little way, feeling and experiencing His constant Presence and Guidance.

One important truth that we, His students, must cherish always in our hearts is His Omnipresence. Wherever we are, we need to conduct ourselves accordingly. Swami is our Inner Soul. He is always with us, in us and around us. The awareness of this truth suffices to boost our confidence and help mould our lives in the right direction.

### **Heart to Heart**

During my student days at Swami's Lotus Feet, I learnt a lot through innumerable such instances. Many times it happened that Swami would refuse to accept a letter from me and I used to feel completely dejected. On one such occasion, Swami gave me the 'cold storage' treatment by not accepting my letter for many days at a stretch. One fine day, He suddenly called me and literally grabbed the letter from my hands. Even without opening the letter, He went on to reveal its contents and concluded with a great revelation, 'I need not go through your letter to know its contents. The prayer in your heart reaches me instantaneously, even before you pen down your thoughts.' To be frank, after this incident I reduced the 'written mail' and instead concentrated on heartfelt prayers. This is what Swami implies when He exhorts us to develop 'a heart to heart relationship' with Him.

### **I Shall Write Anew**

On another occasion, Swami walked up to where I was seated, looked into my eyes and said '*Faithkaawali raa*' in Telugu, which means – 'You need Faith'. Putting His hand on His forehead He went on '**if you have faith in Me, I shall wipe out your old Karma and write a new one. But faith is required.**'

Swami is Premaswaroopa. Just pure, unsullied Love on two Feet. He loves His students so much. His love for us is unfathomable and indescribable. Let me share a very cherished incident in my life.

### **Baba's Bangra Boys**

It was the time of Swami's 60th Birthday in the year 1985. A group of 25 boys, which included me, were selected to perform the Bhangra dance before Swami's chariot as it made its way from the Mandir to the Shanti Vedika in the Hill View Stadium. We had practised more for a stage performance rather than for a procession in front of Swami's chariot. But then, Swami's message came on the evening of November 22nd that we need to be prepared for the procession the next day. All of us were too tired because of various activities on 21st and 22nd November. But we had Swami in our hearts.

Though we slept very late on 22nd night, all of us got up by 3 a.m. on 23rd morning and managed to reach Mandir before 3.30 a.m. Even at that time, all

the streets of Puttaparthi were overflowing with devotees moving towards the Mandir. We managed to squeeze through the crowd. We were tired and by the time we reached Mandir we were already feeling drowsy. But nevertheless, we started dressing up and were ready by 6 a.m. for the procession. The procession was scheduled to commence at 7 a.m.

### **Students Come First**

Swami had already come out at 6 a.m. He then summoned all of us, the Bhangra group boys, into the Bhajan Hall. We were quietly dressing up at the car shed behind the Mandir when we received this message. We rushed into the Bhajan Hall. Swami then enquired from us whether we were ready for the procession and we replied in the affirmative. Then Swami said **'Oh no! You boys did not have anything to eat or drink since morning and you need to be in the procession for at least one and half hours.'**

While everybody including the VVIPs were waiting for Swami to come out for Darshan, Swami was inside the Bhajan Hall, catering to the little needs of His little ones. Swami then sent someone to bring breakfast for us from the canteen and ensured that we had had our fill. **He also went into His room and got apples for us to partake.** All the while Swami was waiting for us to say, "We are ready Swami, we can start". At about 7 a.m. when all of us were ready, Swami put on His white robe and walked up to the chariot and stood on it while the first golden rays of the rising sun fell on the Divine Lotus Feet. The procession started with us performing ahead of His chariot. By His Grace everything went on well. In that huge crowd we were thrown around like puppets. But for Swami's Love and Grace in the morning, we could not have performed the dance. That is the Love of Swami for His students. Students always come first for Him.

### **Spiritual Practice in Business**

Such incidents are unlimited. Each one of His students have baskets-full of such stories to narrate. The underlying theme is Love, Love and Love alone. Swami loves us so intensely and expects us to share this love with the people around us in the same way. He wants us to look at the unifying principle that binds us all. We need to start in our own little way to practise what Swami says. I would like to state how this has helped me in my day to day business.

**When I deal with my customers I feel that it is the same Swami who is also in them and that I need to approach them with the right attitude and love in my heart.** This has always given me an upper hand to solve the most difficult issues which could not be handled by others. When I am at peace, have Swami in my heart and look at my opponent as a reflection of the same Being, positive vibes are generated and that gives me a cutting edge. While other preparations are definitely required for a good negotiation, positive attitude and good vibes can change the whole negotiating atmosphere. In the corporate world, my company calls negotiation and wheeling as dealing skills. I am ranked highest on these skills in my company. But for me the real skill is 'Love in the heart'.

I end this article here with a small prayer to Swami..... “Dear Lord, Let our Hearts overflow with Divine Love for Thee at all times”.

**- Courtesy: ‘Fragrance’.**

**- Heart2Heart Team**

## STRETCH YOUR HAND.....TO GOD

By Dr Keki Mistry

*This is the text of the talk given by Dr. Keki Mistry, a dentist from Mumbai and a long time devotee of Bhagawan Baba, in the Divine Presence on the occasion of Christmas in 2004.*

Beloved Bhagavan and fellow pilgrims on the path in search for truth. On behalf of us all I start with a small prayer. 'We bow to thee, Oh Lord. All names are Your's; all forms are Your's. With hands folded in prayer we asked for the gift of a good mind so that we will think good things, speak good words and do good deeds. Forever keep us on the path of truth so that we may walk life's highways and by-ways without fear or favour, with love in our hearts, Your Name on our lips and good actions flowing through our hands. This prayer we pray to You to grant, oh Lord.'

### **Special Olympics...Amazing Spirit!**

Fellow pilgrims, in the year 2000, the Para Olympics were held in Ireland. The Para Olympics for kids is an Olympics for specially advantaged children - differently advantaged children. The 100 metres mixed race was on. There were 10 lanes with 4 girls and 6 boys, each representing their country. The gun went off and everyone started. While they were in different positions on the track, suddenly there was a noise and the runner in the middle lane fell down.

The amazing thing that happened was that everyone stopped! Each of the 9 other contestants stopped, turned around and all went to the boy who had fallen down. **One of them picked him up, another one dusted his clothes and a girl gave him a small kiss on the cheek and said "That should make you alright"**. Then they all linked hands and went towards the finish line together. **And remember this was at the Olympics.**

There were 45,000 people in that stadium who all stood up and clapped for 15 minutes - there was not a dry eye in the audience. Why? These specially advantaged people showed us the meaning of Sai's message. They bonded together in love and went towards the goal together.

### **"Treat God as a Friend" – A Great Message**

In the May issue of Sanathana Sarathi, 1998, **Baba says that we must treat God as an old friend, and we should not put any distance between Him and us.** If you treat Him as an old friend you will respect Him, you will love Him, and there will be mutual understanding. Bhagavan Baba says you have a lot of respect for a new friend, but still there is a little distance. An old friend is somebody who with whom you naturally get along with. Bhagavan Baba says treat the Lord as an old friend. I think there can be no greater message for us.

## Appreciate the Chance

In the early days Bhagavan Baba told us **'Appreciate and take in all that I am giving you, because towards the end of My life on earth, I will be less mobile and you will be less able to approach Me.'** We thought that You would be surrounded by crowds - which You are. But little did we know that You were giving us the final message – **'Do not be attached to the body-form, the body-form changes, but the message, the message is constant.'** Pay attention to that constant message even now.

### **"He Is Not Your Son...No Cancer."**

Talking of limitations of movement my mind goes back to a personal experience. In 1965, I developed a very bad cough, so bad that I could hardly speak. I could not sleep flat on the bed and I had to spend the nights either sitting down or raised on many pillows. I had myself medically checked and they found a tumour the size of a golf ball in the area between the nose and the throat, very close to the brain. I was only 5 years into my dental practice and I was doing fairly well. If I had not been able to communicate it would have destroyed my career.

Bhagavan called me - how He did that is a different story for another day - and I went to Him with my mother. He sent for my mother saying 'Your mother is not well, bring her along'. Well, one look at my mother and you could tell that she was a sufferer of asthma. There were 200 other people waiting, all suffering in different ways and we were called in 4th. I and my mother went inside and Baba started to talk to my mother, telling her about her asthma, but mother was not concerned about herself. She finally asked the million dollar question, 'Baba is it cancer?' Baba said **'He is not your son. He has come only through you. No cancer.'** He then waved His hand and then took out lot of ash and gave it to her. This was her very first visit, but she got down on her knees to receive it.

### **A Cure, Really?**

Believe me, my dear brothers and sisters, my symptoms disappeared and I could speak normally. I was very nervous thinking that this 'cure' was maybe a trick of my mind. So I did not go to any doctors to verify this possibility. I was a fully checked cancer case, with full records from an ENT surgeon, a cancer specialist and one of Bombay 's leading surgeons.

Six months passed and I was perfectly alright. But the mind plays monkey tricks and I did not get myself checked - I was afraid that the cure was not real. One morning I suddenly got up and began to have a coughing fit and I spat out lots of blood. I was extremely nervous and went running to the ENT Surgeon who had seen me earlier - a good friend of mine staying within a stone's throw of my house. **I asked him to examine me. He gave me a local anaesthetic and on investigation reported that 'There is nothing there'. I was stunned. 'There is not even a trace of tumour there' he continued. This gave me all the confirmation that I needed. This is a documented**

**case and I am here speaking to you now because of the grace of Bhagavan Baba!**

Baba talks to us about being friends. Treat God as a friend. This is a certain duty that is enjoyed on us. Can we not extend our hand in friendship and tell Him, 'Bhagavan Baba, Your hand is always there but sometimes our grip may become a little loose, sometimes it may be slippery. Please keep Your grip on us. Let us pray right now, 'Bhagavan Baba we make this pledge that we shall do everything in thought, in word and in deed to see that Your message is fulfilled.'

### **Puttaparthi Then...**

Puttaparthi was a small dot on the map of Anantapur. It was a cluster of huts in a dusty village. The ladies had to go to the Chitravathi River for water and the river bed was often dry. A child had to walk 9 miles to go to school; there was no medical aid to speak for 40 miles around; and to reach the village the last 3 miles had to be covered by bullock cart.

### **Puttaparthi Now ...**

Today Prashanti Nilayam is the hub and centre of the spiritual world. A University worthy of any university is here and an educational institute where everything is available from KG to Ph.D. A beautiful Hospital giving free medical services as only as Swami can manage, and now Prashanti Nilayam can be reached by many routes - air, road and rail.

### **Let's Make God Our Friend...**

I want you all to think about this. He is the one Avatar who says '**Stretch your hand in friendship**'. Is it not beholden on us today to really seize on that opportunity and tell him 'Bhagavan Baba, in thought, in word and in deed we have stretched our hand on Your 80th birthday. We solemnly pledge that we have done this; and throughout that year and from henceforth forever we shall be united as those disadvantaged children and move towards that goal which you have set out for us.'

Bhagavan was once telling the students, 'Be involved with life, I do not want you to treat life as a tiny flickering flame of a candle; rather as blazing flame to be held for a while and then to be passed on as a roaring fire.' This roaring fire is that of enlightenment, of knowledge, of full realisation.

### **How Can We Change The World?**

Sometimes people ask 'How do you propose to change the world?' The answer to that question is, 'Why do you wish to change the world? Change yourself and there will be one more whole human being in this world.' Today on this holy day dedicated to that Master of Love, who has spread this message of love, is it not important to re-emphasize this message of love

which has been the ancient message of Christ and the teachers of India for so long.

*Ye Duniya Hai,  
Wanha dil ka lagaana kisko aatha hai?  
Hazaaro pyaara karte hai  
Nibhaana kisko aatha hai?*

'This is the world; but who really knows how to share his heart?  
Thousands love, but who loves to the end?'

When today on Christmas Day, Bhagavan has blessed this individual on my 70th birthday to speak before you, it seems like a miracle. I am really grateful for all that You have done in my life to change it and I hope and pray that You continue to shower all Your blessings. In fact, Your blessings are always there on each one of us! It is for us to tune ourselves to receive those blessings Bhagavan.

Jai Sairam!

- Heart2Heart Team

## EXPRESSIONS OF LOVE - II

### A Shivarathri Card for Swami

*In the last issue we began a new section called 'Expressions of Love' to feature cards from students lovingly offered to Swami during different festivals and holy occasions over the years. As we are approaching Shivarathri, the holy night dedicated to Lord Shiva in this sacred month of February, we have now our second beautiful card-story – 'A Shivarathri Card for Swami', presented by the boys almost a decade and a half ago. It is a great inspiring journey going down memory lane for the boys who were involved with the card. Here is the account of one person who was in the thick of things, then as a student, when the card was conceptualized and offered to Bhagavan. Over to OKS Sastry, currently a lecturer in Baba's college in Brindavan.*

"It was the year 1991. I was in the Brindavan campus of the Institute in Bangalore. We students had just taken part in the Sports Meet in Prashanthi Nilayam and Bhagavan so graciously came to Brindavan immediately after the event to see us, to be with us. We were so grateful. He was showering love on all the students and we were literally enjoying every moment of it...shining in His Grace and smiling and sharing His joy.

Soon the month of February approached, and Shivarathri was round the corner. It is a great occasion, a long awaited festival for the devotees; but for us it was bad news. Bhagavan wanted to celebrate the festival in Puttaparthi. Crestfallen, we resorted to the only medium which can melt His heart...prayer. Yes, we prayed fervently to Bhagavan to take us along with Him. We did not want to miss Him even for a day and could not imagine not being part of the glorious festival and losing out on the incredible blessings from Him during this momentous festival.

The prayers were sincere and the result too was overwhelming. Swami had agreed that we could come to Parthi and not only that, we were going to travel just behind Swami's car! Our joy knew no bounds, to say the least. So we were in our buses diligently following every turn and bent that Swami's car took. A few hours and we found ourselves in Muddhanahalli. Swami had stopped there to spend some time with the school children of Muddhanahalli. It was beautiful to see Swami interacting with everyone there – the teachers and the children – in Kannada, the tongue of the region. And then we had a memorable lunch with Swami. After that Swami told us that now He would go quickly to Parthi in His car and that our bus should follow at a slower pace. He would be ready to receive us there.

Now, I was supposed to be writing on the Shivarathri card...why all this narration about the journey and all the drama? Well...I thought it would be fitting to let you know our state of mind...our feeling before we really came up with the idea of the card. With all the blessings that we were receiving from our sweet Lord, our hearts were filled with only one sentiment that '**we should be with Him forever and bask in His Love**'. We did not want to miss Him

even for a moment and we wanted to create a card which will commune this emotion...this intense feeling to Bhagavan.

So we started wondering... who is so blessed to be with Lord Shiva continuously? Who has the opportunity to gaze at Him at all times everywhere and be with Him? And it occurred to us that it was Nandi. Nandi, the so-called bovine vehicle of Shiva from mythology. He is the holy one who is always facing the Lord. You will find Nandi straight in front of the Shiva Idol in every Shiva Temple , looking at Him with unwavering attention and devotion. The idea seemed apt and was immediately executed.

The card was made with a prayer to our Lord Sai who is the *Siva-Sakthi swaroopa*, the embodiment of Lord Shiva and Mother Nature, that '**Let us be blessed like Nandi - at all times focussed on our Lord.**' This prayer was translated into the form of a Telugu poem in the card. The poem also sang praises on the glorious Lord Sai Siva, beseeching Him to bless us by lighting the lamps of love and faith in our hearts.

The card was ready. The Shivarathri morning arrived. The Darshan music started and our hearts started beating fast – with God, you never know...would He come and see the card? Would He like it...? Would He bless it? Something inside said ...Why should we be so doubtful, isn't He the Embodiment of unfathomable Love? Well...all sorts of conversations were going on inside us along with sincere prayers. The much awaited moment arrived. Bhagavan approached us. He saw the card.

He was so thrilled! We were thrilled too! But the story did not end there...Bhagawan again came to us after He finished the round of Darshan, seemingly in answer to our ardent prayers. And what more...He smiled sweetly...as if reading and responding to all the stacked up feelings that were bouncing in our hearts to find expression, and then the grand finale! With His beautiful soft hands, He put down on the card...nay, inscribed on our hearts..."With Love, Baba." He had blessed us with the highest reward...we wanted nothing more. We were full in His love....with His love...by His love. The memory is so fresh as I write these lines...filling me with so much bliss...I hope, dear reader, it fills your cup of joy too reading these golden moments with Sai," Sri Sastry concludes his engaging narrative.

Dear reader, we hope you like these card stories...please let us know if it in anyway helps you or inspires you. We would love to bring you more of such stories in the coming issues.

- Heart2Heart Team

## H2H SPECIAL

### HIS BIGGEST MANIFESTATION FOR ME...HIS LOVE

- *An Interview With Prof. Anil Kumar*

*Prof. Anil Kumar is best known for translating Swami's discourses into English. He also gives very popular talks on Sunday mornings in Prashanti Nilayam and visits many Sai centres for the same purpose. He has been Principal of the Brindavan campus and has authored many books on Swami. He is currently a faculty member of the Biosciences Dept. at SSSIHL, Prashanti Nilayam. He was interviewed by David and Ann Jevons from the UK.*

D: How did you first come to hear about Sai Baba and what attracted you to Him in the first place?

Anil: Back in the year 1970, an eminent devotee and a great scientist by the name of Dr. Bhagavantam happened to visit the town where I lived, and he gave a talk, narrating his experiences with Sai Baba in a most scientific manner, which made a deep impression on me. Later on that year I had some family problems, and so I went to Prashanti Nilayam to ask Sai Baba for help. I can tell you that I didn't get an opportunity to talk to Him, I didn't get to touch His Feet and, as a result, I experienced five very unsuccessful days of togetherness. He was so divinely mischievous. He spoke to almost every person there but me, yet when I returned home I discovered that the family problem had been solved.

The health of my wife had become very bad and when I was at Prashanti Nilayam I prayed within myself saying, "If you really are God, then please give her back to me in good health. We have four children and if she dies I can't take care of the children by myself." Well, without talking to Him, without any padanamaskara or anything of that sort, she regained perfect health.

After this I started reading the discourses, Sathya Sai Speaks, and I became very inspired. As a student I was always first in elocution and debating contests, never in academics. I was never a gold medallist in studies, but in all the elocution competitions and inter-university competitions I always came first. I was very much interested in public speaking and learning effective communication skills. So having been inspired by Swami's discourses I started sharing with small groups about them, and then people started inviting me to come and talk to them about Sai Baba. This went on for eight years.

I went to see Sai Baba on many occasions, but He ignored me, year after year, and not just me, but the whole row in which I was seated. I used to tell my friends that they could sit by me in the canteen and the hotel but never, never sit by me in Darshan, because Sai Baba would certainly never look at them! However after eight long years of waiting He did call me and, what is

more, He asked me to give a talk in the Poornachandra Auditorium and ever since I have been in close contact with Him.

D: Will you tell us about how you first came into contact with Sai Baba? I know that you have told us this story before, but many of our readers will not have heard it, and I personally find it very amusing.

Anil: Well, in 1977, after eight years of exile, I was travelling to Prasanthi Nilayam when Sai Baba's car passed me by on the road going to Anantapur, so I turned around and followed Him to Anantapur. There I discovered that Sai Baba was busy with some trust committee in the Girl's College. Now, in the Girl's College, as you well know, even male mosquitoes are not permitted to enter! So I was stuck outside the gate pleading with the watchman to allow me to enter, but he would not let me in and so I waited helplessly outside. Then Swami suddenly appeared at a door, surrounded by several important people, and the watchman took pity on me and said "Sir, you are free to walk a few steps inside the gate, but please don't go any further." I said, "OK" and walked in. Suddenly Swami shouted "Anil Kumar, come here" and I started running towards Him, at the same time thinking, "How does He know my name? Why has He ignored me all these eight years? Why did He not look at me? Does He not know my problems?" whilst at the same time feeling totally blissful. Swami said, "Oh, last night you gave a lecture about Me and everyone liked it" and then He said, "How is your wife?" I replied "Swami, it was she who brought me to You." "I know", He said, and then He materialised some vibhuthi for me and told me to come and see Him in Puttaparthi.

D: Tell us how you came to be Sai Baba's interpreter. What was the sequence of events that led up to your selection for this job?

Anil: Well, I was the State President of the Sathya Sai Organisation in Andhra Pradesh, and as the State President I used to attend the World Council meetings. One year it so happened that Sai Baba convened a meeting of the members of the World Council in the Mandir. Suddenly He needed an interpreter and since I come from Andhra Pradesh where Telegu is spoken He immediately picked me out and asked me to interpret. At the end of the talk He just said "Oh, fast, very fast!" and that was that and no opportunity presented itself to act as interpreter again for some time. In 1989 I was appointed the Principal of the Sathya Sai Baba College in Whitefield, the Brindavan Campus, and since that time I have been the regular interpreter.

All that I can say about this role is that I'm not always a hundred per cent successful in interpreting, I'm not particularly competent at it and I'm certainly not the only man who can do it. I regard the role more as an opportunity extended to me than something that I have sought. It is more like a blessing conferred on me than an answer to a prayer. I have faltered many times and Sai Baba always corrects me, so I know that I still have a long way to go. I know that I am not perfect, but I just hope that I fulfil the needs of the devotees.

D: By most people's standards you are very close to Sai Baba and I say this not only because you are His interpreter but also because, sitting on the verandah, you are in His presence most days and are always conversing to Him. What has being close to Sai Baba taught you about Him?

Anil: I will be very frank with you, because I know that Western people, people such as the Americans and the British, appreciate frankness and I, in turn, appreciate them for that reason. Firstly, you say that I am close to Swami but, in my experience, the way to get close to Sai Baba is never to discuss personal matters with Him - and by personal matters I mean things like family problems, ashram problems, problems with colleagues, problems with the College, problems with my health, problems at home.

Secondly, I'm very much interested in the message of Sai Baba and so I want to know everything about Him, I want clarification on all His teachings because I'm interested in sharing them with anyone who wants to listen to me. It is a fact that when I talk and share with people about Sai Baba I forget where I am, I forget all my problems, I forget everything, because sharing the message of Sai gives me the greatest joy. So when I have doubts about any aspect of the teachings I want clarification, and who else can tell me but Sai.

So, slowly, I begin to tickle and tease Swami, to put Him in an inconvenient position, even sometimes to cause irritation, so that I can draw a divine answer out of Him, which I can then share with everybody.

Thirdly, I tell Him quite openly how happy I am with Him, how nice He looks that morning, how beautiful is His dress, how sweet was His morning darshan, how well behaved are His schoolboys, how wonderful was His morning discourse and how well received it was by His devotees. I think that it is these three factors that have brought me close to Him.

D: What is the greatest truth that Swami has taught you?

Anil: The greatest truth that Swami has taught me is a kind of preparedness to accept anything that comes to me in life, good or bad, acceptance, or if you want to use another term, spiritual surrender. Surrender, I think, is a higher word than accept. If something unpleasant happens in my life, well that doesn't make me run away from here. If manna from heaven falls upon me, well that doesn't make me feel egotistical or proud. I am prepared to accept with equanimity whatever happens to me, both the good times and the bad times, and no matter what does happen I will continue to love Sai Baba, to listen to His message, to share the joy, the thrill, the excitement of His mission with everybody. The greatest gift that Sai Baba can give me is to allow me to participate in His divine mission.

D: I think that for most devotees that is a very difficult lesson to learn, especially for those who have become physically close to Swami, and then He apparently starts ignoring them, and note that I say 'apparently'. They go to see Him one trip and He recognises and speaks to them and then on the next trip He seems to ignore them. They feel quite rejected.

Anil: It's courtship!

D: Yes, that's right, but it's still very difficult for devotees to accept what appears to be rejection.

Anil: It is very similar to problems at home with the wife or with the children. If I spend a lot of time away from home working in the college or the ashram the children will say to me "Daddy you have no time to spend with us." Being a father is very demanding; I know that to be true.

D: Would you like to tell us about the greatest manifestation that you have ever seen Swami do?

Anil: For me His greatest manifestation is what I call His concern, His love. Let me give you an example. Several years ago I was waiting for the results of my son's engineering entrance examination, but on the very morning when the results were to be published the President of India, the first citizen of this country, was to visit Prashanti Nilayam. Sai Baba slowly, softly, smilingly came walking up to me in Darshan and standing in front of me he lifted up both of His arms and He enquired, "How are you, Sir?" I replied, "Swami, I am very fine." Sai Baba then said to me "How about your son?" and I replied, "Waiting for the results, Swami." Sai Baba responded "No, no. He is going to be selected, he is going to be an engineer, he is going to pass with distinction, don't worry, Anil Kumar." I immediately fell at His Feet and I thought to myself "Oh God, when the President of India and all the VIPs are waiting at the door, you still manage to show concern for this little, unimportant fellow, Anil Kumar. I am grateful to you Swami, for this concern, this love, which rises above position, status and money." So, yes, for me, His biggest manifestation is His love.

D: Ann and I were present Anil that night in Swami's house at Kodaikanal, when Swami materialised a watch for you after you had translated His speech. What is the greatest physical materialisation that you have seen Him create?

Anil: I don't know how many of you have heard of Balarama. Now Balarama was the brother of Krishna. Sai Baba announced one day that on the very next day He was going to invite His schoolboys and some guests to a very special lunch. I asked Swami why the lunch was 'special', to which He replied that He was going to speak on the subject of the wedding of Balarama to Revathi, because tomorrow was the anniversary of their wedding day. The lunch was to be a banquet with twenty-five items on the menu. So on the very next day this special banquet, the wedding lunch, took place with twenty-five items on the menu, and foreigners and sundry guests of honour attended it.

That evening Swami gave a talk. He described how all the Gods and Goddesses attended the wedding of Balarama and Revathi. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva all attended this divine celebration with all the other Gods and Goddesses and towards the end of the ceremony Brahma gave a wedding gift. Someone asked Swami "What was the wedding gift?" At this point in

time Sai Baba's hand described three circles in the air, there was a buzzing sound like that of a honeybee and to the shock and astonishment of those present He materialised an article that was the size of a jug.

Well, let me describe that article. It was an arch studded with diamonds, four rows of four, and there must have been around 200 diamonds in the arch. The frame of the arch was made up of gold with again diamonds in rows of four. There was a platform of gold, and in the centre an ornamental swan hung by a golden chain with diamond eyes, and in the centre the stomach of the swan was like a glass, it was transparent. Everybody started looking at it in sheer amazement.

Sai Baba said "Anil, look at it." "Oh, it is wonderful, Swami" I replied and He said "No, look at the nose of the swan." I said, "Yes, Swami, it is so beautiful." Sai Baba then said "No, look at the eyes of the swan." "Yes, Swami" I replied, "They are made of diamonds." "No, no" said Swami, "You are a fool," to which I responded "Swami, that is nothing new. I know that I am a fool. That is not saying anything that I do not already know. I am not about to become a fool all of a sudden. Let me continue to be a fool!" Then Swami said, "Look at the stomach, you fool." I looked at the stomach and what did I find there, nothing less than the figure of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba in a reclining posture. Now that is manifestation. I don't think that I will ever see another manifestation like that in the years to come.

D: We once made Sai Baba laugh in an interview by using the expression 'Baba stories', which is the name that we use to describe the stories that devotees pass around about Sai Baba's doings and materialisations. Indeed, Swami Himself once said that Baba stories are better than bhajans, because people often go to sleep in bhajans whereas people always stay awake when Baba stories are being told because they are interested. What is the best Baba story that you have heard?

Anil: Yes, some people do indeed go to sleep during bhajans, but that is for one reason only, they don't understand the meaning of the bhajans. They go to sleep because there is no yearning, no sincerity, no pining for God. People only sleep because they don't understand the meaning, because their heart is not ready, because their mind is full of worldly thoughts, of business and day-to-day matters. Baba stories, on the other hand, never put people to sleep because they are understood immediately, because they are full of fun and frolic, because they apply to our day-to-day situation, because they make you laugh.

Let me give you a simple example. One day, in Darshan, Sai Baba was talking to the children from the primary school. He asked one young boy, just six or seven years old, "Where do you come from, boy?" The boy replied, "Swami, I come from you." Sai Baba then turned around and said to all the VIP's sitting on the verandah "See, if I was to ask you that question, you would say "I come from Bombay" or "I come from Madras" or "I come from England", but this little boy says "I come from you", now that is divine. Children are divine.

Then Sai Baba put a second question to the boy "How many brothers do you have?" Back comes the reply "Swami, all are my brothers," Sai Baba then said "See how broad minded children are. This little boy considers all are his brothers, but if I were to ask you that question, you would say "Two brothers, Swami" or "Three brothers, Swami", you are so narrow minded."

Then Sai Baba put a third question to the boy "How many sisters do you have?" Back comes the reply "Swami, all are my sisters." "No, no, no" said Sai Baba, "All are your sisters excepting one, your wife." Well, everybody laughed and then Sai Baba asked the boy "How many wives do you have?" to which the boy replied, "Swami, all are my wives." "Oh no, no, no, you are wrong," said Sai Baba, adding, "That boy thinks that he is smart enough to give a reply to Bhagavan."

Then Swami said to the boy "Who are you?" Back comes the reply "Swami, I am God." Sai Baba then said, "Well, if you are God, then you can go and give Darshan" and everyone burst into laughter. People love His jokes, His humour.

D: What do you regard as being the greatest success that has come from your relationship with Sai Baba?

Anil: Yes, that is a good question. Do not misunderstand me if I put across this point of view. You may not agree with me. The Hindu philosophy is so vast that it can be very confusing. One school of philosophy speaks of Non-dualism or Advaita, another speaks of Qualified non-dualism or Vishista Advaita, another speaks of Dualism or Dvaita. Yet another school of philosophy advocates the worship of God in form, Sakara, another wants you to worship the formless God, Nirakara, another wants you to worship God without attributes, Nirguna, another wants you worship God with attributes, Saguna. What am I to do? One guru says that you should follow the path of action, Karma Yoga, another says that you should follow the path of devotion, Bhakti Yoga, and there are nine ways of devotion, another says that you should follow the path of wisdom, Jnana Yoga. There are literally thousands of Gods in existence and I sometimes think that the number of Gods exceeds the human population. What am I to do?

It is at that moment that Sai Baba steps into my life. He teaches that jewels are many, but gold is one, that cows are many, but milk is one, that flowers are many, but worship is one, that beings are many, but breath is one, that stars are many, but sky is one, that nations are many, but Earth is one, that forms are many, but God is one. He teaches the principle of oneness, of unity, of Advaita.

So the greatest gift that I have received from Sai Baba is clarity in my thought, accuracy in my approach, exactness in my practice, giving no scope for any doubt or confusion whatsoever. I've now got very clear views; no one can confuse me, because Sai Baba has given me a clear picture of philosophy. That is the greatest gift that Sai Baba could have given me and I want nothing

more from Him than that. I don't want any of the rings, chains or lockets that He gives away. That stage has gone forever.

D: Can you look back and see some incident in your relationship with Sai Baba where at the time you thought it was a great mistake, a failure, but, on looking back now, you can see it as a great learning experience? Was there ever a time when you thought that you had really blown it but, subsequently, it turned out to produce a giant leap in faith or consciousness for you?

Anil: On a personal note, I come from a family that, for three generations now, has followed a religion, which worships God without a form; a God Who does not experience either birth or death. We worship a God without attributes. We don't believe in reincarnation. We don't accept Rama and Krishna. We don't follow any form of worship. We think of God as a phenomenon, as a being Who is beyond birth and death. Now I was brought up in that belief, so Sai Baba took eight years to make me deserving enough to accept Him, to make me ready to accept His philosophy, to make me ripe enough to absorb what He had to give me. So I had an eight-year period of probation, to make me more sympathetic, more receptive, to Him. At the time it wasn't a very pleasant experience, but looking back now I can see that it was necessary for me, and so I have no regrets.

D: More and more foreigners are coming to the ashram, especially in recent years. As I look at the scarves of the devotees in the Darshan lines I am continually seeing the emblems of countries that I have never seen before, some from quite small and remote countries. Has Sai Baba ever said anything to you about the foreigners that come to the ashram and what is their purpose in his mission?

Anil: Well, I'm not very happy when I say that I have to envy you your position. We Indians feel very, very jealous about this, but I will be honest with you! Sai Baba is often telling His students and those people who are very close to Him physically that if they want to learn what devotion is they should watch the foreigners. Sai Baba says that even if He doesn't talk to the foreigners, even if He doesn't look directly at them, even if He does not get physically close to them, what a tremendous satisfaction they still get just from watching Him in Darshan. He says that their eyes dance in ecstasy, their faces break into smiles and are full of joy and bliss, like 1,000 watt light bulbs, whereas many of the Indians are unsmiling and their faces look like they've taken castor oil.

Sai Baba also says that if He says "Hello" to a foreigner and asks Him where he comes from, all of his friends gather around Him afterwards and say "Swami talked to you, what did He say, share with us how it felt" and they share their joy around, whereas many of the Indians are jealous and feel envious that Swami has spoken to someone else. Swami also points out that immediately after Darshan many Indians get up and walk away, whereas the foreigners sit in silence and meditate and think of Swami and, as a result, they receive the divine energy from Swami, whereas the Indians start to gossip and so lose that energy.

Sai Baba compares the foreigners to honey bees who fly long distances, land on the lotus flower of Bhagavan and suck up the nectar of the divine, partake of His message and mission, and then return to their own countries full of satisfaction, joy and bliss, with good thoughts of Swami whereas many Indians are like frogs, hiding under the leaves of the lotus flower, unaware of the divine nectar that is available to them. Sai Baba says that they are near but not dear to Him.

On one occasion Sai Baba used the analogy of a lighthouse to make the same point. He said that Sai Baba is like a lighthouse. The light from the lighthouse goes to far off distances but right underneath the light house there is a shadow, a place of total darkness, and so those from afar bask in the light of the lighthouse, whereas those that are close to it live in darkness or ignorance of the light. Sai Baba has also said that many foreigners have a better knowledge of Sai Teachings, read more of Sai literature, exemplify his message more purely than many Indians. Finally, most foreigners come from a very high standard of life and here in Puttaparthi they bear many inconveniences gladly. Why do they do this? It is for Swami. Anyway I am going to stop here because I don't want to criticise myself anymore by recalling anything further that Swami has said about this subject!

D: The next ten years are supposed to be very difficult years both for the planet and for Humanity living on it. Have you heard anything about this from Swami, about what is going to be taking place on the Earth in the next ten years and I'm talking now in terms of major Earth changes?

Anil: Well I personally don't think that such changes are all going to happen in a ten-year period. Sai Baba has talked about the future, but only in general terms of it being confusing, disturbing and agitating. He has said that there will be no peace or harmony in the home, no understanding even amongst the members of the same family. There will be no peace in society at large as, with the advances in the fields of science and technology, man is acquiring more and more conveniences, more and more material possessions and, as a result, is becoming utterly selfish. As a direct result of this man is denied both joy and happiness and a realisation of the divinity within him. He is living the life of an animal.

It is because of this that Sai Baba is here. It is in this time of turmoil and turbulence that the Sai message is so desperately needed. The Sai Baba mission has come to teach us satisfaction, commitment, dedication and selfless service, love and forbearance. Our divine qualities will give us greater joy than any business or self-centred interest, they will remove all traces of 'I and mine' and family self-centredness.

D: Even though more and more Westerners are now coming to India each year to see Sai Baba, it is obviously impossible for all Westerners to do this, because they cannot all fly to Puttaparthi, both for reasons of money and airline availability. So in what way do you think Swami is going to reach those Westerners who cannot come, how is He going to touch the consciousness of the West?

Anil: Sai Baba has given us an example. In an army a general is in control of a formation of ten thousand men. The general is one, but he controls thousands of men and in similar fashion every foreigner when he returns home will be able to influence thousands of other foreigners. Those who come to Puttaparthi are the selected few who are going to influence thousands of devotees both now and in the future. For example, Howard Murphet's books have influenced thousands and thousands of people all over the world and will continue to do so.

Remember the influence of Jesus Christ's apostles, how they spread his message all over the world. Similarly, today, the few disciples of Sri Ramakrishna have spread the Ramakrishna mission all over the world. Change is always going to be brought about by the few. Remember it only takes a spoonful of sugar to make a tumbler full of water sweet. So one person is all that it takes to bring about a change in many.

D: One of the main points of misunderstanding between Westerners and Sai Baba, in my opinion, is over this issue of time. Sai Baba says "I will see you tomorrow", but then tomorrow comes and He doesn't see the person, because His 'tomorrow' is obviously not our 'tomorrow'. Some devotees get really upset by this apparent breaking of a promise, by someone who they have been told is God not behaving as they think God should. What is your experience of Swami's time?

Anil: Yes, there are two standards of time. Human time is bound by the sunrise and sunset, the day and the night, and is based on the now, whereas divine time encompasses the past, the present and the future. Whatever Sai Baba says is based on divine time. For example, when I say tomorrow, I mean during the twenty-four hour period of the very next day, whereas when Swami says tomorrow it could mean any day because He thinks of the past, the present and the future as one. Then you may say "Well, why is this so, why does He confuse us?" The answer is that it really doesn't matter what day He sees you, because the day that He chooses will serve your purpose the best in the long run. He is not just thinking of the immediate future, as you do, He is thinking of past, present and future and of what is going to help you in the long run. You tend to think only of material benefit, whilst He thinks of spiritual benefit, benefit for all time.

D: Anil, what has your relationship with Swami taught you about God?

Anil: I take it by God, you mean the God within?

D: Yes.

Anil: Whenever I give a talk, either in Kodaikanal or in the EHV Building here in Prashanti Nilayam, I never prepare my talk beforehand. Moreover, Swami will suddenly say to me "Anil, get up and say something" and if I feel like talking on devotion, then, He will ask me to speak on wisdom and vice versa! So all my talks are unprepared and that is the way that Swami has brought me up ever since 1978, when I gave my first talk. The miracle of miracles is

how everything always works out and how it always seems to be what people want. This, of course, is all down to Swami, because He chooses the subject matter, the points to be made and the way in which the talk unfolds. So this, above all, makes me feel that He is God. When He asks me certain questions and I answer, I often wonder how I managed to answer like that, because I know only too well how I would normally answer. One thing I do know is that you will never have the last word with Swami; He will always outsmart you. Let me give you an example.

An elderly professor who sits on the verandah one day told Swami that he was suffering from cataracts and so Swami told Him to go to the hospital and have a check up. Then He looked at me and said, "You also have cataracts." I said, "Swami, I have glasses, I don't have cataracts", to which Swami replied "I can see you have glasses, but you have cataracts in both your eyes." I said "Swami, me?" "Yes, you!" said Swami. "One eye is suffering from the cataract of attachment, the other eye is suffering from the cataract of ego" to which I replied, "Well, if that is so, Swami, then it is time for an operation. You are the divine doctor, so why don't you operate right now." Everybody laughed.

Then Swami, who is the divine master and always has the last word said "But the problem is not only in your eyes, because from top to bottom you are diseased with ego and attachment." Then I said to Swami "This calls for major surgery, an immediate operation, please do it at once." Sai Baba replied "Oh, no, if you don't come to Me what can I do. If you come to Me, then, I will operate, but you have not yet come to Me, so what can I do?" I then said to Swami "Swami, when am I not with You? Am I not serving in your college for the ninth successive year?" "Ah" said Sai Baba "You are physically here, but mentally you are somewhere else, so unless you are mentally and physically here and totally surrender to me, how can I operate." Game, set and match to Swami!

Once I said to Swami in Kodaikanal "Swami, you say that I am not the body, I can accept that. You say that I am not the mind, I can accept that too. You say that I am not the intellect, that seems reasonable too. You say that I am Atma, I hope that that is true. So the question I want to ask is this - when you ask someone in Darshan "When did you come?" what exactly are You asking, because if we are not our body, then, the body has not come, if we are not our mind, then, the mind has not come, if we are not our intellect, then, the intellect has not come, so I can only be here as Atma, so why do You bother to talk to me?

Swami replied "If you really feel that you are Atma, then, I wouldn't put that question to you at all, but because you think that you are the body, then, I ask you that question. If you really feel that you are the spirit, I would not put that question to you at all." Game, set and match to Swami again! You can never catch Him out.

I find that there are the moments of personal attachment, when God enters into my life and I get closely linked and associated with Him, when I am

touched by His love and concern for me. The mistake in identity only comes when we put God on a high pedestal and say to Him "I know that you are God and that I am human, nevertheless, I know that I can meet You when I go to church on Sunday or when I go to temple on Thursday, because I know that You will be there." The reality is not like that at all. God is in your heart and understands everything that you think, say and do. He knows the innermost secrets of your heart.

Let me give you one final example. One day, in Darshan, I was reading a letter from my daughter, who is a doctor in the USA, in Minneapolis. She was doing her internship there at the time and she had written me a very touching letter in which she told me not to worry about her, adding that Americans were very kind people, who were always ready to help her. She had experienced no problems in settling down there and in being accepted by American society. She then went on to relate about a little miracle that had happened to her.

One day, while returning home from the hospital, she missed a turning and got lost. She could not find the way back to the hostel where she was staying. Even though she felt like crying, she began singing some of Swami's bhajans instead and prayed to Swami for help. Immediately an American stopped his car and said, "May I help you? Where do you want to go?" She gave him her address and he dropped her off at her hostel. She concluded her letter by saying "Daddy, don't worry about me." I folded the letter and put it in my pocket, wiping away the tears of joy that were flowing down my cheeks, and then suddenly I realised that Swami was standing in front of me and so I started smiling and pretended to be happy.

Swami said to me "Where is the letter?" I replied "Letter, Swami?" not wanting Him to know about my daughter's letter. "Yes, the letter," said Swami "the one that is there in your pocket, give it to Me." I replied, "But Swami, it is a personal letter" to which He responded, "Oh, is there anything personal between you and Me? Shall I tell you the contents of that letter? If you are not going to give it to Me, I will tell you what is written in it." I said, "Swami, it is a letter from my daughter." Sai Baba then said "Your daughter in America constantly thinks of me, whilst you, who are here close to Me, think only of your daughter in America! That is the difference."

A: I would just like to ask you one question before we finish this interview. I have got very confused lately, because although I used to be very attached to Swami's physical form I am now starting to relate more to his omnipresence, but I find it very hard to relate the form to the omnipresence. I know that I am looking at His body and that He is not the body, or even the mind, as you have been saying. So how do you handle this problem?

Anil: Well, I think that the answer to that question is going to be the next step in your spiritual sadhana. There are many instances when we see Swami's face in the face of the man sitting next to us. Even though He is formless we still see Swami's face there. Similarly, when we are listening to someone talking to us, we suddenly hear Swami's voice. Sometimes we might even feel

that Swami walking along side us. Now that is omnipresence. So let us just remember that all names, all forms are His, and try to shift our consciousness from the limited to the unlimited, from the finite to the infinite, from the form to the formless.

-Heart2Heart Team

## GET INSPIRED

### PICTURE OF PEACE

There once was a King who offered a prize to the artist who would paint the best picture of peace. Many artists tried. The King looked at all the pictures, but there were only two he really liked and he had to choose between them.

One picture was of a calm lake. The lake was a perfect mirror, for peaceful towering mountains were all around it. Overhead was a blue sky with fluffy white clouds. All who saw this picture thought that it was a perfect picture of peace. The other picture had mountains, too. But these were rugged and bare. Above was an angry sky from which rain fell and in which lightening played. Down the side of the mountain tumbled a foaming waterfall. This did not look peaceful at all. But when the King looked, he saw behind the waterfall a tiny bush growing in a crack in the rock. In the bush a mother bird had built her nest. There, in the midst of the rush of angry water, sat the mother bird on her nest... perfect peace.

Which picture do you think won the prize? The King chose the second picture. Do you know why? Because, as explained by the King: **"Peace does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble, or hard work. Peace means to be in the midst of all those things and still be calm in your heart. That is the real meaning of peace."**

In a discourse delivered on the 20th of April 1975, Swami said,

"There can be no happiness without inner peace. To earn that peace, and to be unshakably established in that peace, one must develop full detachment through steady practice. From birth to death, one is a slave to habits and practices. One needs to examine these, and rely more and more on those that lead to subjective joy rather than objective pleasure. Subjective joy can be acquired by harmony at home, mutual cooperation among members of the family and the community, acts of service to others and a concern for the welfare and prosperity of the society in which one lives."

- Heart2Heart Team.

## **THE EMPEROR'S SEEDS**

An emperor in the Far East was growing old and knew it was time to choose his successor. Instead of choosing one of his assistants or his children, he decided something different. He called young people in the kingdom together one day. He said, "It is time for me to step down and choose the next emperor. I have decided to choose one of you."

His children were shocked! But the emperor continued. "I am going to give each one of you a seed today, one very special seed. I want you to plant the seed, water it and come back here one year from today with what you have grown from this one seed. I will then judge the plants that you bring, and the one I choose will be the next emperor!"

One boy named Ling was there that day and he, like the others, received a seed. He went home and excitedly told his mother the story. She helped him get a pot and planting soil, and he planted the seed and watered it carefully. Everyday he would water it and watch to see if it had grown. After about three weeks, some of the other youths began to talk about their seeds and the plants that were beginning to grow. Ling kept checking his seed, but nothing ever grew.

Three weeks, 4 weeks, 5 weeks went by. Still nothing. By now, others were talking about their plants but Ling didn't have a plant, and he felt like a failure. Six months went by; still nothing in Ling's pot. He just knew he had killed his seed. Everyone else had trees and tall plants, but he had nothing. Ling didn't say anything to his friends, however. He just kept waiting for his seed grow. A year finally went by and all of the youths of the kingdom brought their plants to the emperor for inspection.

Ling told his mother that he wasn't going to take an empty pot but his mother said he must be honest about what happened. Ling felt sick to his stomach, but he knew his mother was right. He took his empty pot to the palace.

When Ling arrived, he was amazed at the variety of plants grown by the other youths. They were beautiful -- in all shape and sizes. Ling put his empty pot on the floor and many of the other kids laughed at him. A few felt sorry for him and just said, "Hey nice try."

When the emperor arrived, he surveyed the room and greeted the young people. Ling just tried to hide in the back. "My, what great plants, trees and flowers you have grown," said the emperor. "Today, one of you will be appointed the next emperor!"

All of the sudden, the emperor spotted Ling at the back of the room with his empty pot. He ordered his guards to bring him to the front. Ling was terrified. "The emperor knows I'm a failure! Maybe he will have me killed!"

When Ling got to the front, the emperor asked his name. "My name is Ling," he replied. All kids were laughing and making fun of him. The emperor asked everyone to quiet down.

He looked at Ling, and then announced to the crowd, "Behold your new emperor! His name is Ling!" Ling couldn't believe it. Ling couldn't even grow his seed. How could he be the new emperor?

Then the emperor said, "One year ago today, I gave everyone here a seed. I told you to take the seed, plant it, water it, and bring it back to me today. But I gave you all boiled seeds, which would not grow. All of you, except Ling, have brought me trees and plants and flowers. When you found that the seed would not grow, you substituted another seed for the one I gave you.

**Ling was the only one with the courage and honesty to bring me a pot with my seed in it. Therefore, he is the one who will be the new emperor!"**

So be careful what you plant now, it will determine what you will reap tomorrow.

- Heart2Heart Team

## THE JOY OF GIVING

Back in the fifteenth century, in a tiny village near Nuremberg, lived a family with eighteen children. Eighteen! In order merely to keep food on the table for this brood, the father and head of the household, a goldsmith by profession, worked almost eighteen hours a day at his trade and any other paying work that he could find in the neighbourhood. Despite their seemingly hopeless condition, two of the elder children, Albrecht and Albert, had a dream. They both wanted to pursue their talent for art, but they knew full well that their father would never be financially able to send either of them to Nuremberg to study at the Academy.

After many long discussions at night in their crowded bed, the two boys finally worked out a pact. They would toss a coin. The loser would go down into the nearby mines and, with his earnings, support his brother while he attended the academy. Then, when that brother who won the toss completed his studies, in four years, he would support the other brother at the academy, either with sales of his artwork or, if necessary, also by laboring in the mines. They tossed a coin on a Sunday morning after church. Albrecht Durer won the toss and went off to Nuremberg.

Albert went down into the dangerous mines and, for the next four years, financed his brother, whose work at the academy was almost an immediate sensation. Albrecht's etchings, his woodcuts, and his oils were far better than those of most of his professors, and by the time he graduated, he was beginning to earn considerable fees for his commissioned works.

When the young artist returned to his village, the Durer family held a festive dinner on their lawn to celebrate Albrecht's triumphant homecoming. After a long and memorable meal, punctuated with music and laughter, Albrecht rose from his honored position at the head of the table to drink a toast to his beloved brother for the years of sacrifice that had enabled Albrecht to fulfill his ambition. His closing words were, "And now, Albert, blessed brother of mine, now it is your turn. Now you can go to Nuremberg to pursue your dream, and I will take care of you."

All heads turned in eager expectation to the far end of the table where Albert sat, tears streaming down his pale face, shaking his lowered head from side to side while he sobbed and repeated, over and over, "No ...no ...no ...no." Finally, Albert rose and wiped the tears from his cheeks. He glanced down the long table at the faces he loved, and then, holding his hands close to his right cheek, he said softly,

"No, brother. I cannot go to Nuremberg. It is too late for me. Look, look what four years in the mines have done to my hands! The bones in every finger have been smashed at least once, and lately I have been suffering from arthritis so badly in my right hand that I cannot even hold a glass to return your toast, much less make delicate lines on parchment or canvas with a pen or a brush. No, my brother ...for me it is too late."

More than 450 years have passed. By now, Albrecht Durer's hundreds of masterful portraits, pen and silver-point sketches, watercolors, charcoals, woodcuts, and copper engravings hang in every great museum in the world, but the odds are great that you, like most people, are familiar with only one of Albrecht Durer's works. More than merely being familiar with it, you very well may have a reproduction hanging in your home or office. One day, to pay homage to Albert for all that he had sacrificed, Albrecht Durer painstakingly drew his brother's abused hands with palms together and thin fingers stretched skyward. He called his powerful drawing simply "Hands," but the entire world almost immediately opened their hearts to his great masterpiece and renamed his tribute of love "The Praying Hands."

The next time you see a copy of that touching creation, take a second look. Let it be your reminder, if you still need one, that no one - no one - ever makes it alone!

*Source: Unknown*

- Heart2Heart Team

## TEST YOUR SPIRITUAL QUOTIENT

### SPIRITUAL QUIZ

1. In the Indian epic Mahabharatha, how did Karna get his name? *Karna* means 'ear' in Sanskrit?
  - a. Because he always listened to the advice of elders.
  - b. Because he had acute hearing abilities.
  - c. Because he gave away his divine earrings to Lord Indra as charity.
  - d. Because he had oversized ears.
  
2. Complete Swami's famous saying – *You cannot always oblige ...*
  - a. but you can help.
  - b. that is life.
  - c. but try harder next time.
  - d. but you can always speak obligingly.
  
3. What important habit does Swami tell us to practise first upon waking up?
  - a. Cleaning the tongue.
  - b. Saluting the sun.
  - c. Drinking coffee.
  - d. Practising asanas.
  
4. What is the meaning of the name '*Raamaayana*'?
  - a. The life of Rama.
  - b. The journey of Rama.
  - c. The song of Rama.
  - d. Rama's victory.
  
5. In the Bible, how did Moses receive the Ten Commandments?
  - a. They were whispered into his ear by God.
  - b. They were shown to him in a dream.
  - c. They were found by him inscribed onto stone tablets.
  - d. An angel gave them to him written on parchment.
  
6. A follower of the Buddha commonly recites *The Three Refuges* to confirm his commitment to Buddhism. These are: to take refuge in the Buddha, the *Dhamma* and the *Sangha*. What does *Dhamma* refer to?
  - a. Ritualistic worship.
  - b. The teachings of the Buddha.
  - c. The life in heaven.
  - d. Prayer and fasting.

7. The foundation of the Muslim religion is based on the 'Five Pillars'. One of these is *Zakah* - what does this refer to?
- The practice of giving alms.
  - Praying five times a day.
  - Reading the Koran.
  - Making a pilgrimage to Mecca.
8. Complete this famous saying from Swami. *Who is the poorest man in the world?*
- The man with the least money.
  - He who does not follow a moral path.
  - He who does not know God.
  - He who has the most desires.
9. 'Shivarathri' means "Auspicious night". How is Shivarathri celebrated in Prashanti Nilayam?
- By dance and music dedicated to Lord Shiva.
  - By taking out Shiva's chariot into the streets.
  - By all night Bhajans.
  - By feeding the poor night long.
10. When Swami was a young boy He appeared in the sanctum sanctorum of a temple, whilst at the same time, being outside the temple guarding His companions' baggage. This miracle of appearing in two places at once occurred at which temple?
- Rameshwaram
  - Sri Sailam
  - Tirupati
  - Hampi

## Answers To Quiz

1C

Karna was found by his parents in a basket, adorned with earrings and wearing armour, gifted by Lord Surya the god of the Sun, both of which made him invincible in battle. Disguised as a beggar, Lord Indra asked for these as alms to render him vulnerable in combat against Arjuna, who later managed to defeat him, only with Krishna's help.

2D

Swami advises us "If you cannot oblige, speak obligingly' is the golden rule you should follow. When you salute others, it goes to God. When you criticise or abuse another person, that also goes to God. You must discourage and control the emergence of bad qualities. When you are in a bad or an angry mood, keep silent." - *Divine Discourse of 26/4/1998*

3A

Recently Swami revealed some personal details by way of example for us to follow. "Usually I get up from bed ...brush My teeth, and also clean the tongue and mouth thoroughly...I feel happy only when My tongue and mouth are clean. A clean tongue helps in maintaining purity of body and mind...You might have observed Me talking to a number of people, every day. I will spend 20 minutes talking to those who keep a clean tongue and whose mouth does not emit bad odour. On the other hand, I do not talk to those with bad odour even for two minutes." - *Divine Discourse 21st October 2004.*

4B

*Ayana* means goal or journey. Thus the meaning is 'the journey of Rama'.

5C

"And the Lord said unto Moses, 'Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them.'" - *The Bible, book of Exodus ch 24 vv*

6B

For one who follows Buddhism it is traditional to undergo a ceremony called 'Going for Refuge.' At the heart of the ceremony is the recitation of the following canonical verses: 'Buddham Saranam Gacchāmi; Dhammam Saranam Gacchāmi; Sangham Saranam Gacchāmi' which means 'To the Buddha, I go for refuge. To the Dhamma, I go for refuge. To the Sangha, I go for refuge.' Swami teaches us that "The real meaning of the prayer is: You must divert your Buddhi (mind) towards Dharma (right conduct). And right conduct should aim at serving society. When this is done, society becomes purified."  
Divine Discourse 15-5-1997

7A

The literal meaning of *Zakah* is purity. In practice it refers to the annual amount of money which a Muslim distributes among the needy. In a Divine Discourse on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1983 Swami said that “The Quran has *Salat and Zakah* as the two eyes. *Salat* means prayer; *Zakah* means charity. Those who consider charity as a high duty and elevate their consciousness through prayers and continuous meditation on God are Muslims.”

8D

Swami tells us that "Man is deluded by his unlimited desires. He is living in a dream world. He is forgetting the Supreme Consciousness (Para-tattwa). That is why it is important to keep our desires under control, to place a ceiling on them... Curtail your desires, as materialistic desires lead to a restless and disastrous life. Desires are a prison. Man can be freed only by limiting his wants. You should have desire only for life's bare necessities.”

9C

‘Shivarathri’ means "Auspicious night". At least on this day, one should chant Shiva's name all through the night. At least on one day in a year, chant the Lord's name. This night, devotees are expected to stay awake by chanting the sacred name of Shiva. Keeping awake in any other way is purposeless. Spending the night reciting the Lord's name sanctifies one's life”. - Divine Discourse: 25th February 1998.

10D

Please see the following link for the full story from Swami’s Discourse of 29<sup>th</sup> May 2000.

<http://www.ssbpt.info/summershowers/ss2000/ss2000-14.pdf>

-Heart2Heart Team

**SPIRITUAL CROSSWORD ON THE PRINCIPLE OF LORD SHIVA**

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## CLUES

NOTE: (1) The starred clues have English words as answers – otherwise they are all Sanskrit words.  
(2) Sanskrit words for answers can vary in spelling.  
For example, sita/seeta/sitha/seetha, jnana/gnana, siva/shiva, etc.

### Across:

1. Abode of Lord Siva.
5. Any verse in Samskrit.
10. Angry-looking.
11. A ferocious animal vehicle for a 'delicate' Goddess!
13. A weapon of Lord Siva.\*
15. Numeral signifying unity.\*
16. \_\_\_\_\_ Devata, meaning one's favourite deity.
18. Wisdom.
21. Script of a language.
22. A place of delight.\*
23. The Son taught the meaning of this to His Father.
24. The minute particle of any substance.
25. A poison, Haalaahala, gave this colour to Lord Siva's throat.
26. A typical taste of Indian cuisine.\*
27. Cow or cattle.
29. Daughter of the mountains.
30. The bull that moved aside for a devotee's sake.
31. The final act of a living being.\*
35. A poisonous ornament!\*
36. Lord Siva's function.\*

### Down:

2. The demon who was killed by Lord Siva's embrace.
3. Untruth.\*
4. Auspicious prefix.
6. Expression of wonder.\*
7. 'Nerve'ous snake!
8. Length of existence.\*
9. Lord Siva as the Teacher.
11. Weapon of Lord Siva representing Brahma, Vishnu, Maheswara.
12. A musical note.
14. The Panchakshari Mantra with the usual prefix.
17. It flowed down, but its name here rises up !
18. The leader of Lord Siva's followers.
19. A Greek letter.\*
20. LET UMA wear this to ward off evil.\*
28. The best gift from God.\*
32. Sound inlet.

**SOLUTION**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9						
K	A	I	L	A	S	A	S	L	O	K	A		D	
	D		I		U			O		10				
										U	G	R	A	
11				12		13	14		15					
T	I	G	E	R		B	O	W	O	N	E		K	
R				E			M			D			S	
16			17											
I	S	T	A				N			A			H	
D			G		18	19		20		21				
					G	N	A	N	A	L	I	P	I	
22					23									
E	D	E	N		A	U	M	M		I			N	
D			A		N		24			25				
							A	N	U	N	I	L	A	
26														
T	A	N	G		E	S		L		I			M	
					S		I		E				27	
													G	
	28			29										
	G			P	A	R	V	A	T	I			O	
	R							A					R	
30										31		32		
N	A	N	D	I			Y			D	I	E	T	
	C				33		A		34			A	H	
					U				Y					
35								36						
S	E	R	P	E	N	T		D	E	S	T	R	O	Y

## **THE HEALING TOUCH**

### **“SAI BABA HAS GIVEN ME A SECOND BIRTH!”**

This is a moving story of a plucky young boy from Rajasthan, Ravi Solanki, who is now in all smiles with his heart problem forgotten like a bad dream in the mists of time, thanks to his successful surgery in Baba's Hospital in Bangalore.

When your eyes rest on the frail form of Ravi, you begin to wonder how old he is. Not more than 6 years, you might say. But then, heart problems can create a mismatch between age and the physical frame. Ravi, though he appears 6, is actually 12 years old. And he is a heart patient.

Ravi's father, Rana Ram Solanki is a vendor, who makes his living selling vegetables from a push-cart. He had no high ambitions except to see his four young children settle down in life. The eldest child, a son, is in 10th standard and works part-time in a two-wheeler repair shop. Next are two daughters who are studying 7th and 9th, and lastly there is Ravi, large expressive-eyed Ravi, who is undoubtedly the apple of everyone's eye.

Right from birth Ravi used to have breathing difficulties and spells of unconsciousness. Trips to the local doctors in Jodhpur, Rajasthan and specialists in Delhi all pointed to the same diagnosis: a hole in the heart. They all suggested the same solution: heart surgery. Rana Ram was appalled at the fact that the surgery would require him to be prepared with Rs. 2.5-3.0 lakhs. The doctors were able to answer his medical queries but were not able to answer his more urgent questions as to how and where he, with his limited means, could ever arrange such a large sum of money.

The medicines doctors prescribed for Ravi kept him going till he was around 8 years old. The spells of unconsciousness never left him though, and as a result, he could never play any games. He could not attend regular school, but to keep him occupied, his parents admitted him in a small school which was five minutes walk from home. All the while, the parents had only a nagging doubt in their minds...how long would medicines alone keep him alive? They were praying fervently to God to shower His grace on their sweet child. Little did Rana Ram and his wife realize that their prayers were about to be answered.

One day, when Ravi fell unconscious and Rana Ram was out selling vegetables, Ravi's uncle who was at home rushed out to call Rana home. At that moment, Rana happened to be selling vegetables at the house of a medical representative. He hurriedly left his cart at the medical rep's house and dashed home. After a few anxious moments, little Ravi regained consciousness. Thanking God, Ravi's father, went back to the medical rep's house to collect his cart. When questioned, Rana narrated the sad tale of his child's condition and expressed his fears over the fate of his son. It was then that the medical rep told Rana about Sai Baba, about His 'Hospitals', which

performed heart operations for 'free'. He suggested that Rana should take Ravi to Swami's Hospital at Bangalore for a checkup and treatment.

In this commercial world free treatment and that too of a super-speciality nature seems incredible and too good to be true. Rana Ram could not believe his ears. However, after persuasion, he requested one of his relatives in Bangalore to check up whether there exists such a Hospital at all. It was only after he received such a confirmation that he brought Ravi to the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences, Bangalore for a checkup. It was confirmed by the doctors after a checkup that Ravi had a complex hole in the heart and that it needed surgery. Medicines were prescribed and he came once again to the Hospital for a checkup. Finally, the date for surgery was fixed and Ravi was admitted in the Hospital.

For a lad of his age, he took the prospect of an operation quite bravely. When you ask Ravi, "When the doctors told that you needed surgery, didn't that scare you?" he replies, "No, I was not scared. My parents were very worried whether the surgery would go on smoothly or not. I used to console them telling not to worry, and that everything would be alright." His faith in the doctors in whose hands he has entrusted his life and in Baba is really striking. Though he has never seen Swami in person, Ravi has seen Baba performing *Vibuthi Abhishekam* on the Shirdi Sai statue on one of the TV channels.

After surgery Ravi recovered very well. His uncle went to Puttaparthi, to express the family's gratitude to Swami for giving Ravi a new lease of life. Rana Ram says, "We are so very happy that his life is saved. *"Pehla janm uske Ma ne diya...doosra janm Sai Baba ne diya"* (His mother gave him the first birth...Sai Baba has given Ravi a second birth).

Sitting in his cosy bed in the post-operative ward with his hair neatly parted, Ravi dishes out broad smiles to all who come to talk to him. Very gentle in manners, when posed the oft-asked question as to what he would like to become when he grows up, Ravi quietly but resolutely answers, "A doctor" with the feeling of gratitude towards the doctors who saved his life welling up in his eyes. His father fills in for him: "The doctors have saved his life. It is his wish that he grows up to save others' lives."

Wishing to make a point about the helping attitude of the doctors at the Hospital, Rana takes out from his purse the visiting card of the chief cardiac surgeon, who also performed the surgery. He says that the surgeon gave it to him with instructions to call him "anytime", to discuss Ravi's health. Rana is so pleased. "I have already told quite a few people about the Hospital. We are so grateful that such a Hospital exists."

- Heart2Heart Team

## MOVING EMPATHY...

### **Tender Reflections of Reality .... from Baba's Hospital in Bangalore**

**By Ashwin V**

Do you have any idea of how many patients *write* to the hospital each day? I'm sure you'd never guess. Receiving and replying to patient letters is not something one thinks of when one mentions a hospital. Nevertheless, correspondence can keep one very busy here. Each working day the postman deposits a few handfuls at our door. Ask me to describe the experience in a few words; I would choose to put it in just one - *priceless*.

You must see it to believe it. Letters from the very poor all over the country; some ask for an appointment; some request an opinion; some write for details on admission and stay. Our's is a world that lives by the benefits of a faster and more efficient e-mail. But what choice do the poor and illiterate in India's villages have? The paper they write on is occasionally faded, the lettering often unsure and replete with errors. Ramappa's has no previous medical records attached. He writes saying that he can't afford a doctor. All his money goes to feed his family of five.

Every now and then you come across a letter you need some help reading. Take the case of Anita's. You struggle with the words for a bit. And then realize that words convey little beyond a certain point. Anita, suffering with a diseased heart, signs off with an ink-stained thumb. She can't write; doesn't know how to. The quiet desperation of the helpless unlettered in our villages can't be more pronounced than that.

I write this little passage, wanting to share the contents of one letter in particular. It is from Ananda who writes from Calcutta. His handwriting, on first glance, is in neat and legible English letters. That is before you notice his signature. It is definitely Bengali, small set letters penned by a hand in brilliant blue, while the rest of his letter, a different hand, is scribed in black.

Like many other patients who know little English, Ananda had a helping hand to pen down his request. "Honourable Sir," He begins. "Thank you for your letter inviting me to the hospital for surgery." He was a patient with Coronary Artery Disease who was to be operated in the Hospital that month. We had sent him an appointment for his Bypass. I thought I knew what he was driving at. The poor man possibly wants his surgery postponed, I thought. Some patients struggle to even fund their journey to Bangalore and often can not keep up their appointment. I was totally unprepared for what followed.

"You will be happy to know that at present I am keeping very well," he continued. Ananda had, with some help, managed to get his surgery done back home and was doing fine. But what opened up a world of emotion was the simple request that followed. He writes -

"So, I would very humbly request you to be kind enough to cancel my date of surgery as well as please give chance to another poor patient instead of me. Yours sincerely..."

It hits you. The simple request. The empathy that only patients who suffer would know. The spontaneity and sensitivity of those whom we coin as "deprived."

Poor? Definitely not.

*Ashwin V, a Technical Officer at SSSIHMS, WF, is a former student of Baba's Institute.*

- Heart2Heart Team

## **HOSPITAL STATISTICS**

### **Bangalore Super Speciality Hospital**

*Cumulative Statistics from 19th Jan 2001 to 31st Dec 2005.*

Cardiac Surgeries: 6,059

Cardiac Catheterisation: 12, 138

Neuro Surgeries: 5,388

CT Scans: 17, 285

MRI Exams: 19,822

### **Puttaparthi Super Speciality Hospital**

*Cumulative Statistics from 22nd Nov 1991 to 31st Dec 2005.*

Cardiac Surgeries: 17,191

Cath Procedures: 17,147

Urology Surgeries: 28,068

Ophthalmology Surgeries: 27,443

Echo Cardiography: 396,660

