

HEART 2 HEART

VOL 5 ISSUE 3, MARCH 2007

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Page No.</u>	<u>Section</u>
03	BETWEEN YOU AND US
	SPIRITUAL BLOSSOMS
06	SATHYA SAI SPEAKS – Seek Oneness and Bliss Through Ramayana
09	CONVERSATIONS WITH SAI BABA - Part 30
15	<i>CHINNA KATHA</i> – Bharatha's Adoration of Rama
	COVER STORY
16	THE CHENNAI CITIZENS' CONCLAVE – ...DIVINITY DIFFUSES ALL DIFFERENCES
	FEATURE ARTICLES
33	IN QUEST OF INFINITY - Part 3: The Birth and Death of Stars
44	THE SAI MOVEMENT IN URUGUAY
	SERIAL ARTICLES
54	THE DIVINE STORY OF SHIRDI SAI PARTHI SAI - Part 27
56	GITA FOR CHILDREN - Part 28
	WINDOW TO SAI SEVA
60	MANSSION OF LOVE - THE REVOLUTIONARY SRI SATHYA SAI HEART HOSPITAL AT RAJKOT
70	PRASHANTI DIARY
	SWAMI AND ME
83	IN TUNE WITH THE DIVINE
88	WHAT TO ASK FROM SWAMI?
98	TSUNAMI OF LOVE
	H2H SPECIAL
101	HOW I BECAME FASCINATED WITH SAI – PART 1

SAI WORLD NEWS

- 110** NOTEWORTHY EHV WORKSHOPS IN ABU DHABI, U.A.E
- 116** LOVE OF SCIENCE AND SIGNS OF LOVE

GET INSPIRED

- 119** THE WOODEN BOWL
- 120** THE PACKED HOUSE
- 123** PACKED BLESSINGS

TEST YOUR SPIRITUAL QUOTIENT

- 124** MULTI-FAITH QUIZ
- 128** QUIZ ON HEART2HEART

THE HEALING TOUCH

- 131** 'GIFT OF LIFE' TO THE 'GIFT OF GOD'

- 134** YOUR SAY

BETWEEN YOU AND US

It was three score and five years ago, India's independence was still in the womb of time. The state of Tamil Nadu never existed and most of South India was part of British India's Madras Province. In fact, both Puttaparthi and Madras City (now Chennai, the capital of Tamil Nadu) were part of the composite Madras. And for Bhagavan, who was just sixteen years then, Madras was almost like an extension of Puttaparthi, given the scores of visits He made very frequently. Not many will know that Swami visited this city as early as 1942, and what happened in those years is really fantastic. In the first year of His visit, He cured the asthma of Sri Parthasarathy, who happened to visit Him in a neighbour's house, by creating an apple for him! And his mother's cataract was cured amazingly in ten days when the young Sathya applied on her eyes a bandage of jasmine petals!

What happened in 1943 is even more astounding. Sri Lokanatha Mudaliar had become completely mentally challenged when an illegal occupant of his land, who was also a notorious occultist, cast evil spells on him. The doctor had, in fact, advised his family to admit him in a mental hospital. And then, suddenly something wonderful happened. Swami appeared in Mudaliar's dream and gave him '*Thulasi* (basil) water' saying, "Take this. You will be alright". Next morning, his madness had vanished.

Cut to January 19, 2007, after more than six decades, the Lord played a similar drama, although in a totally different scale and dimension. Now it was not '*Thulasi* water' for one Mudaliar, but the torrential flow of Sai Ganga for multitudes, which cured the "madness of disunity and malaise of disbelief in God" that unfortunately had plagued this holy state. And the cure came not via a 'dream' but a dream-visit of the Lord to this 'land of temples', after a hiatus of ten years. Now, to heal the current 'cataract of narrow vision', it was the 'jasmine of joy' that the divine enveloped the whole city with for ten days. Just as Mudaliar had then fallen at His Feet and cried, "Lord, You are my all" when Swami visited his house the next day of that dramatic dream, the Chief Minister of the State was completely bowled over. While his wife touched His Feet, Dr. Karunanidhi, casting aside completely his six-decade-long sworn atheistic image, said, "The question is not whether God exists or not, but whether our deeds are pleasing to Him." He continued, "For me...the blessed Sai Baba...is equal to God." And Swami, the ever-compassionate one, referring to Karunanidhi said, "I give him My heart".

Imagine the charismatic and outspoken Union Railway Minister Sri Lalu Prasad Yadav declaring, "He is not just Baba...He is Bhagavan." In fact, the modern world needs no more testimonies of the transmuting power of pure love. What happened on January 21, 2007 in the 40,000-seater Nehru Stadium packed with the who's who of Tamil Nadu and Chennai, is something which history will cogitate on for years to come.

Imagine four Chief Ministers, three Union ministers and two governors – all belonging to different political affiliations with their party ideologies miles away from each other, seated on the dais next to Swami in a rare demonstration of

bonhomie and talking about cooperation, sharing and unity to solve the country's problems! When you read our cover story you will not only get a complete overview of the grand proceeding of that day but also get a deep insight into the background and the sequence of events that led to the landmark occasion that the Chennai Citizens' Conclave was. What could not be achieved with decades of deliberations and thousands of confrontations since India's independence was happening that day. Pure love was flowing in Chennai [see our Photo Album] and it was absolutely irresistible; it had submerged and soothed everyone with its coolness and serenity.

And it is not only Chennai, it is happening in various corners of India and the world in different forms - we just have to look around. If you thought Baba's Hospitals in Puttaparthi and Bangalore, which provided the best tertiary health care absolutely free of charge, were role models only in theory and could never be replicated elsewhere, then you must visit Rajkot, a town in Saurashtra, the least developed region of the state of Gujarat. It is incredible how more than six hundred completely free premium cardiac surgeries have been performed in the Sri Sathya Sai Heart Hospital of Rajkot, silently and selflessly. And they are now adding operation theatres, conducting Heart-Camps in the remotest and severely under-developed settlements in search of the most hapless ones to be operated upon, creating hundreds of dedicated workers and inching towards the thousand-surgery-mark at great pace.

When did this hospital start? Who is managing this 'fairy tale of a hospital'? How did this miracle come about? Read our story in the Sai Seva section and you will have a dozen myths about modern healthcare shattered by the time you complete it. When pure love takes over, 'impossible' becomes a redundant word.

How else do you explain devotees dedicating their lives in caring service in gratitude and love from a tiny triangle shaped country nestled in the shores of South Atlantic Ocean thousands of miles away from Puttaparthi? How Sai has entered Uruguay and brought about a U-turn in the lives of hundreds of its citizens is truly fascinating. This is our twelfth story covering Latin America in the features section and there seems to be no end to His unfathomable ways.

In the just concluded Shivarathri celebrations, Swami said, "Consider love as your everything. It is only then that you will have a fruitful life". When you will read the experiences of Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma, world renowned Santoor Maestro, or the sweet anecdotes narrated by a little girl, Ms. Vaishnavi, from Chennai, in the SwaMi and Me section, you will see live examples of this. If you want more, there is the revealing interview with Dr. Keki Mistry, an eminent orthodontist from Mumbai, in the H2H Special section. This will not only startle you but also tell you how beautiful and blissful life can become when real love becomes its only pursuit.

Dear reader, this is the month of March, and it's time for us to march! As we see Sai's glory manifesting in a million ways every moment all over the world (incidentally, the Chinese just finished their grand New Year celebrations at

His Lotus Feet; you will find reports and lots of pictures of this in Prasanthi Diary), let us tune ourselves to this Universal Consciousness that is Sai, feel His love, plunge into The Mission and redeem our lives. Opportunities such as these come rarely in history and let us not let the diamond slip from our hands. Let us make our life His message. Let us become just that – Pure Love; completely in harmony with Him.

Loving Regards,
H2H Team.

SPIRITUAL BLOSSOMS

SATHYA SAI SPEAKS

Seek Oneness And Bliss Through Ramayana

Ramayana is the Joint Epic of Rama and Sita

The term "Rama" means one who is pleasing and lovable. "*Ayana*" means movement or journey. "Ra" refers to *Atma* and "Ma" refers to Mind. The Rama Principle means merging the mind in the *Atma*. "Ramayana" means suffusing the world with the bliss of the Rama Principle. But it is not Sri Rama alone that is involved in this process, Sita is also an epic personality. "Rama" is another name for Sita. The Ramayana is thus a joint epic of Rama and Sita or Sita-Rama Ramayanam.

Rarely in the world do we see married couples who are identical - man and wife - in their physical features, their qualities, behaviour, thoughts and capacities. But in the case of Rama and Sita the similarity was complete in every respect. There were no differences in features, qualities or other aspects. The truth of this is evident from what Hanuman experienced. Once Hanuman happened to look at Sita when she was alone. He got a doubt whether Rama Himself had assumed a feminine form. Looking at Sita, he thought it was Rama himself. Hence Rama and Sita should be regarded as one identical entity and not as separate beings.

Role of Three Cities in Ramayana

The inner significance of the Sita-Rama story will be clear when we consider the role of the three cities in the Ramayana. First comes Mithila. Emperor Janaka was its ruler. He was a *Brahmajnani* (one who possesses knowledge of identity of individual self with the cosmic being) who had renounced everything. Like water on a lotus leaf, he was completely detached, with no concern for worldly things. Having no children of his own, he brought up with great love a foundling (Sita). There were two powerful entities in his kingdom - Siva's bow and Sita. Once, while engaging in play, Sita lifted the giant bow of Siva with astonishing ease. Struck by this feat, Janaka decided that Sita should be given in marriage only to one who could handle Siva's bow and be worthy of Sita's hand. With this resolve, he invited princes for Sita's *svayamvara* (self-selection of a husband by the bride herself). Rama arrived and lifted Siva's bow as lightly as Sita had done. Janaka realised that Rama and Sita were well matched in every respects - beauty, character and strength.

Sita was no ordinary woman. She was the embodiment of *Maha Maya* (supreme divine illusion). Rama acquired *Maha Maya* as his consort. Sita, for her part, sought oneness with the *Atma* principle represented by Rama. The marriage of Rama and Sita represents the association of the *Atma* and the

Maya. It is in this combined form of *Atma* and *Maya* that Rama entered Ayodhya.

"Ayodhya" means "invincible". Its ruler was Dasaratha. Dasaratha means one who has made his ten *indriyas* (sense organs) the five organs of action and the five organs of perception—his chariot. Allegorically, this means that Dasaratha represents the body, with its ten organs. These sense organs are related to the three *gunas* (qualities) *Satwa*, *Rajas*, *Tamas* (goodness, passion, ignorance). Dasaratha's three wives - Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi - symbolise these three attributes.

Dasarata's Four Sons Represent Four Vedas

When one is influenced by *gunas*, he develops desires. The four sons of Dasaratha were the embodiments of his desires. Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrughna symbolise the four Vedas *Rig*, *Yajur*, *Sama* and *Atharvana*. The *Rig Veda* figures in the *Yajur* and *Sama Vedas* to varying extent. It is the embodiment of *Dharma*. *Yajur-Veda* embodies *mantras* (sacred formulae). Lakshmana was continually engaged in contemplating about Rama and immersing himself in the Rama *mantra*. Bharata was one who could not bear separation from Rama and who was ever dwelling on Rama's name and form. He was the embodiment of *Sama Veda*.

Shatrughna was one who had mastered all the sciences and used his powers for protecting his brothers. He was skilled in the use of all kinds of weapons. Thus the four Vedas, taking the form of the four brothers, were sporting in Dasaratha's palace...

Ramayana is a Guide On Human Relationships

Among the four brothers there was boundless love and regard for each other. When Rama went to the forest and was in Chitrakuta, Bharatha came there to entreat him to return to Ayodhya and reign as the legitimate heir to the throne. Rama refused to return, saying that Bharatha should rule over Ayodhya in accordance with the promise given by Dasaratha. The argument between the two was ultimately resolved by Sage Vasishta who told Bharatha: "Do not cause any pain to Rama, who is Divinity itself and who has come down to protect the good and uphold *Dharma*."

Bharatha pleaded for taking Rama's sandals and administering the kingdom in Rama's name till he returned to Ayodhya. There are a series of episodes in the Ramayana to show how deep was the love between the four brothers and how devoted were the younger brothers to Rama. Such fraternal love is an example to the world for all time. The Ramayana is a guidebook on the ideal relations between mothers and children, between husband and wife, between brothers, between the ruler and the people, between the master and the servants and many other human relationships. Rama showed compassion to the dying eagle Jatayu, which had fought with Ravana when he was carrying Sita away to Lanka and Rama gave refuge to Vibhishana, even against the fears expressed by Lakshmana. These are examples of Rama's supreme

benevolence and magnanimity towards anyone who revered him or sought his protection. Rama declared to Lakshmana: "Anyone who comes to me in a spirit of surrender, whoever he might be, is mine and I am his. I shall give him asylum. This is my vow." Rama was a man pledged to one word, to one wife and to a single arrow.

Devotees should install Rama in their hearts and celebrate Rama Navami for achieving *Atmic* bliss. Going through the Ramayana epic they should reach the state of "*Atma-Rama*" (oneness with the Universal Spirit). In such a state there is no *Ahamkara* (ego-sense).

- Divine Discourse on Rama Navami, April 7, 1987

CONVERSATIONS WITH SAI - Part 30

(continued from the previous issue)

Meditation on Light

SAI: (To a group of westerners) Any doubts or questions? Spiritual questions only.

A Visitor: Why a lamp in meditation?

SAI: Why a light? From the sand, if one takes, it will be depleted. From the water tank, if each one takes, the tank will go dry. But a thousand people can take the flame of one candle to light their candles and the flame is in no way diminished.

Light a lamp or a candle. Gaze straight ahead at the flame. Then take the candle flame, the Jyothi, into your heart and see it in the midst of the petals of the heart. Watch the petals of the heart unfold and see the light illumine the heart. Bad feelings cannot remain. Then move the flame to the hands and they can no longer do dark deeds. In turn move the flame in like fashion to the eyes and ears so they may henceforth take in only bright and pure sensations. Then move the light outward and into your friends, relatives and enemies, and then into animals, birds and other objects so that all are illumined by the same light.

Christ said, 'All are one, be alike to everyone'. In this way you will no longer be limited to this body, but will expand throughout the universe. The world which is now so big, will become very, very small. **To expand beyond self and see that your light is the light of the universe is liberation. Liberation is not different from this.**

A Visitor: To keep sitting straight is certainly not easy to do.

The Importance of a Straight Spine

SAI: To sit straight is important. Between the 9th and 12th vertebrae is the life-force. If the spine is injured at this point, paralysis occurs. If the body is in a straight position, as if it were wound around a straight pole, the life force may rise up through the straight body and give the quality of intense concentration to the mind. Moreover, just as a lightning rod attached to the roof of a building attracts lightning, in like fashion, a perfectly straight body provides a conductor, so to speak, for divine power to enter the temple of your body and give you the strength to accomplish your task and reach your goal. As another example, the divine power is always here, just as radio signals are here. But to hear the radio music there must be an antenna. Further, if the tuning device is not properly adjusted, there will just be some sound but no music. In like fashion, the divine power, which is always present, may flow into you if the meditation is correct and the body straight.

A Visitor: How about the *Brahma Muhurta* meditation?

SAI: *Brahma Muhurta* means early morning, between 3 - 6 a.m. It means that the senses are quiet, not yet agitated by the day and mind is quiet from sleep. But the hour should not be taken and changed around, taking one time today and another

time tomorrow. A half hour in the morning and a half hour in the evening is enough for sitting meditation. If done all day along, it will lose its attraction after a couple of years. The spiritual practice should be varied for interest. Some bhajan, some repetition of the Name of the Lord, some time spent in the company of spiritual people and so on. Just as in daily life some variety makes the day interesting.

H (Hislop): Swami, how should the period of meditation on the Jyothi be brought to a close?

SAI: First you are in the light. Then the light is in you. Finally, you are the light and the light is everywhere. Enjoy for a while, then bring the light back to the heart and hold it there for all the day. The form of God may also be included. Krishna, Rama, Jesus, Sai, as you wish. The form of God selected may be seen in the centre of the flame wherever it is carried, and, then you are with God everywhere.

Other Meditations

A Visitor: At the meeting it was mentioned, people doing other kinds of meditation should not join the Sathya Sai Baba Centre.

SAI: This yoga and that yoga is not the answer. Yes, they may join even if doing other meditations. Let all unite in the one goal. God is reached only through love. Pranayama subjects the heart and the lungs to strain and pressure. The health must be good. Bhakthi yoga is best. A big mixture will only create confusion. The meditation on light is safe and sure and leads directly to the goal.

A Visitor: But if one has been initiated into another meditation, Swami's book says it is a sin to change.

SAI: The goal remains the same. There is just some change in the pathway, method employed. Meditation on light is real meditation. Light is formless, eternal, divine. It is the safe way and the sure way. But above all is love. Love is the royal highway to God. God is love. At the beginning we should carefully consider and investigate the meditation or sadhana that we propose to adopt. Who is the guru? What is the result? If then we have full confidence that it will take us to our spiritual goal, then go ahead and stay with it. But it is a spiritual goal that we aim for, not a physical goal, not a goal at the sensory level.

How to Attain Self-Confidence

A Visitor: But how can I get that self-confidence that I do not have?

SAI: To do the bad things, you have the self-confidence to go ahead. The same self-confidence is also there to do good things. Everyone has self-confidence.

H: That is very good.

SAI: Yes, it is important. The self-confidence is already there. If there is the interest in the good things, the self-confidence is already there to carry them out. People go to

America and charge various amounts for spiritual information which belongs to everyone and for which no charge should be made. The information should not be sold and the Americans should not buy.

Liberation Through the Jyothi Meditation

H: Swami, in the description of the light meditation, I was not quite sure how Swami said it had liberation as the result.

SAI: You are the light. The same light is found in others also. The body drops away and you are the light. That is liberation.

H: Does Swami mean that by means of light one expands through the entire universe and is no longer limited by body?

SAI: 'My' falls away. There is no longer 'My'.

H: Here is a meditation given by the Lord Himself and it takes one direct to liberation. Why would a person wish to bother with any other meditation?

SAI: Some sensory pleasure, some body result.

H: Yesterday, Swami, people got the idea that any kind of meditation could be used at a Center.

SAI: Don't worry about that. After a little while they will feel how great is the 'light meditation' and change to this. Do not force them. Give them some time.

H: Swami says that it is a benefit of the highest order if an individual's life is such that he merits God's love. How to directly experience that divine love?

SAI: In the kitchen is a sweet. Now, you must come from afar to the kitchen to enjoy the sweet. Only when you eat the food is the hunger relieved. To enjoy the sweetness of divine love, you must attempt to experience it direct. How to get the ability to experience the divine love directly? Our ancient Rishis enjoyed bliss by going to solitude and sitting with their bodies stiff and apparently lifeless. On the other hand, people are all the time shaking their heads and bodies. Such people cannot get concentration. The body is described as a temple containing the Lord. If this part of our body keeps on shaking, the contents, the mind, will also be shaking. That is why in meditation certain postures are described, and they must be maintained.

When in meditation take the mind deep so as not to be distracted. The deeper the mind is taken, the less it is disturbed by the surrounding noise. In the Gita it is said that concentration precedes wisdom. If in sitting for meditation, you keep on scratching your head or your back you will not be doing the right kind of meditation. Some people sit for meditation. They simply sit, but then they are wondering how soon they can move from that posture.

When in meditation, concentrate on the form chosen by you, then pass into contemplation and then into meditation. Only by the three states will you get there. From concentration, one must cross the field of contemplation to enter meditation. There are three things: the meditator, the chosen form, and the process of meditation. The three should merge

and become one, and this is the state of meditation. But, if all the time you feel you are meditating, this cannot be called meditation. When there is complete attention on the form chosen, that will lead to meditation. The attention of the mind is totally removed from the body and totally concentrated on the form chosen as the object of your meditation.

H: The other day, Swami, not only were the college boys delighted at the return to Brindavan, but they were very much surprised. I also was, because Swami had said He would definitely stay at the ashram.

SAI: Baba made the decision to stay in Prasanthi Nilayam through Sivarathri. That was His sankalpa. His will is as iron. On the third day of the festival, the boys at Brindavan decorated the cows and had a procession, and their longing for Swami was so strong that Swami made a sudden decision and came to Brindavan. It might be asked, **Swami's Sankalpa is as iron, how could that be changed? Well, devotion is as fire. Fire will melt iron. God is moved by devotion.**

Swami's Advice on Vibhuti and Physical Ailments

H: Swami, people are making conflicting statements about the use of Vibhuthi. Should a devotee of Swami use Vibhuthi as the only treatment for sickness and injury?

SAI: Do not give any importance to minor sickness and injury. In more serious matters, it is best that prayer be made to Swami. This is important. Vibhuthi may or may not be used, but there should be prayer.

H: How about the help that is ordinarily available? Should a person try that first before calling to Swami?

SAI: Some people have faith in doctors, and some have faith in Swami.

H: But Swami, that is exactly the problem. People are afraid that if they do anything except use vibhuthi they are demonstrating lack of faith in Swami.

SAI: **Actually, both can proceed together. The doctors can be consulted, and Vibhuthi can also be used. But, regardless of the degree of faith, it is best to pray to Swami for His Grace.**

H: Some devotees go to the extreme. No matter how serious the disease or trouble, they declare they will use vibhuthi only and will never go to a doctor.

SAI: If they wish to do that, they may. Swami's preference would be that ordinary means of help be given their due place.

The Importance of Self-Inquiry

H: Swami says that self-inquiry is three-quarters and meditation one quarter. What is skillful self-inquiry? Action can be either skillful or unskillful.

SAI: The devotee may not have any particular skill, but all can inquire for themselves if what they propose to do is right or wrong.

H: But are we not to take inquiry as meaning self-knowledge, knowing about what goes on within oneself?

SAI: Self-knowledge certainly is about oneself, not about the outside.

H: In finding out about oneself, Swami advises that we ask if we are the body, the mind or the intellect.

SAI: You are the witness of all these.

H: One notices other things. Every desire announces itself as "I" even though exactly contradicted by past and future desires.

SAI: Really, there are only two "I"s. One is the ego; which is always identifying itself as "I", and the other "I" is the eternal witness, which is Swami. If there is awareness of the witness, the ego "I" will not bother, it does not much matter.

H: In self-inquiry, Swami, a person may notice that while his idea is that he is a free agent, yet in fact he is pushed around and made to act by all sorts of influences. Actually one is not all free, he is like a prisoner, is he not?

SAI: That you are not free is wrong. Only up to a certain stage is one's life according to the influences that bear upon him - such as heredity, circumstances, tendencies and so on. Later on, one is superior to and free from influences.

H: But Swami, if one is a prisoner that is the fact at the moment. If one observes this fact about himself he may then develop a very deep interest in freedom?

SAI: Very few people have these deep levels of self-inquiry. As yet they have not gone deeply into the matter. Ripeness is a factor here. In talks with devotees, these aspects of Sadhana should be brought forward and their importance indicated by your own experience.

Restraining the Show of Negative Emotions

H: One observes many emotions in himself. Swami, some are damaging - such as anger, hatred, jealousy, depression, fear and so on. These are very strong and they come up despite one's best intentions.

SAI: This is a very important topic. It is important in America where emotions are strong and lead to violent action.

H: There seems to be a possibility, Swami, that a person can curb these dangerous emotions from going on into action.

SAI: The problem is that people have some knowledge from books, but they do not have the general knowledge of life that comes with spiritual power. With discipline, prayer to God and steady sadhana there is a spiritual power which comes up within a person, and the strength of dangerous emotions is reduced.

But, even apart from that, people can and should try to restrain these harmful emotions from outward expression. There may be anger, hatred, depression raging within, but the person's outward behaviour should remain peaceful. His

smile should be calm. With all his strength he must resist any show of these harmful emotions. This is a topic of the highest importance. Self-inquiry, and this matter of emotions are of the greatest importance. When talking to devotees at centres you must deal with these two aspects of spiritual sadhana clearly and emphatically.

(On previous occasions, Swami has said that dangerous and harmful impulses and emotions will vanish automatically in the Presence of God; that evil forces are products of grief, and cannot exist where there is Ananda, the happiness that arises when one loves God with all one's heart and sees Him everywhere).

H: Another puzzling thing that may be observed is the falling away from one's goal. For example, a person may show the most steadfast determination to hold to the Lotus feet of the Lord. Then a year or so later, that person has left Swami.

SAI: The reason for this is a weakness of mind in the initial stage. In the first perception of his goal, the person's mind was wavering. Had he been one-pointed and clear at first, he would not fall away from his goal. The fault lies in a wavering mind that is lacking in one-pointedness.

H: Swami, one more question, please, about household pests. The housewife is in a constant battle with ants, mosquitoes, cockroaches, etc. Unless she fights, these insects take over home.

SAI: It is all right, they must be dealt with.

H: People are afraid they may be committing a sin against Swami if they kill these small creatures.

SAI: There is nothing wrong in keeping the home free from the assault of these small creatures. But only where you are, your area. Not outside.

The Soul is One

H: Swami, if one ant out of a colony of ants is killed, is that killing an individual Jiva? Or, is there a sort of group Jiva whose body is the colony of ants?

SAI: There are no individual Jivas. Jiva is one only. Only one. Jiva is never injured, never killed. Bodies are many. Minds are changeable and may be affected. Bodies may be killed, may die. But Jiva is unaffected. Jiva is one and eternal.

SAI: The rule for spiritual life is to be cautious. Start carefully, drive carefully and arrive safely.

(On a previous occasion, Swami said, "Be steady; be resolved. Do not commit a fault or take a false step, and then repent! Have the deliberation, the decision, the discipline first; that is better than regret for the mistake made".)

(To be continued)

CHINNA KATHA

Bharatha's Adoration Of Rama

The Rama Principle is the Principle of Love that descended from Heaven as the Gift of the Gods, as a result of the Great Sacrifice. Rama means Delight! Nothing delights more than one's own innate self, and so, Rama is also known as Atma Rama. How then could Bharatha agree to usurp the throne, of which Rama is the rightful heir? He and Satrughna were at the Kekaya capital, when Rama was exiled and Dasaratha died, heartbroken at the separation. News was sent to him, and when he entered the palace, unaware of the double tragedy that had cast its gloom over the City, he sensed some calamity. Vasishta, the family preceptor, advised him to ascend the throne, for the empire was suffering an interregnum!

Bharatha appealed that he be allowed to go to "the God of my prayers, the Lord who receives the homage of my unceasing adoration." Vasishta told him that it was his father's command, and his preceptor's counsel that he sit enthroned as ruler. Bharatha replied that the request was proof of the extreme hatred that the parents, the people, the preceptor and everyone in Ayodhya had towards him, for had they loved him, they would not have pressed him to commit such a mean sin. Bharatha stood before Vasishta with folded palms.

He prayed, "Is it just, is it fair, that you should burden me with the sovereignty over a kingdom, which slew my father, widowed my mothers, exiled my dearest brother, whom I value more than my very breath, to the demon-ridden jungle, with his dearly beloved queen and which finally brought indelible disgrace on my mother? My empire is the realm which Rama rules over, namely, my heart, which is too small to contain His glory." Bharatha's name itself signifies that he is saturated with love of Rama. (*Bha*—means, Bhagavan—the Lord, Rama; *ratha*—means, pleased by, happy over, attached to).

Let the Love for the Lord grow in you, as it did in Bharatha. Let that sense of adoration, which discarded even a throne, flourish in you. Then, you can be of great use to your country, your culture, your society, your religion and your community. Or else, all this bother that you have undergone, to attend *Sathsanga* (good company), to listen to spiritual discourses, study spiritual texts, etc. will be a colossal exercise in futility.

-Baba

COVER STORY

THE CHENNAI CITIZENS' CONCLAVE

...Divinity Diffuses all Differences

Sai Ram. As devotees are well aware, Swami made an eleven day trip to Chennai in January 2007. While the journey was primarily for attending the Ati Rudra Maha Yagnam that Swami Himself had commanded be conducted in Chennai starting 19th January, Swami fulfilled many other engagements. An important one was gracing the Chennai Citizens Conclave held on 21st January in the Nehru Indoor Stadium.

Prof G Venkataraman who went with Swami took extensive notes, based on which he gave two talks over Radio Sai. We reproduce below the transcripts of those two talks combined into one composite text, and supplemented with many pictures.

In future issues, Prof. Venkataraman will cover other aspects of Swami's trip, including the yagna and the trip itself.

I wish to present a report on a historic public meeting that took place on 21st January, during Swami's recent trip to Chennai. This meeting, formally called Chennai Citizens' Conclave, was held in order to express the gratitude of the people of the city to Bhagavan for saving this huge metropolitan city from the misery of its drinking water shortage. Before I start describing the proceedings of the Conclave, I ought to, for the record, first say a few words about the age long drinking water problem Chennai had, and what part Swami played in solving the problem.

Chennai, formerly known as Madras, came into existence thanks to the British. Not many are aware that it was in Madras that the British first landed in India. It is only later that they went to Bengal, founded the city of Calcutta, which remained the capital of British India till New Delhi came into existence to mark the coronation of King George V as the Emperor of India. Interestingly, the Dutch landed around the same time at a coastal village about 65 km south of Madras, and that village is known as Sadras. Because the Dutch had to retreat, Sadras continues to remain a small fishing village to this day. In the case of Madras, the story is very different.

Normally, major habitations take root near a source of water like a river. Madras on the other hand came into existence simply on account of a historical reason – the British landed there. Right from the beginning, the British recognised that drinking water was a problem. The first attempt to deal with this was to erect a small dam across a river known as Kosasthalayar. This was not much of a river in the sense water flowed in it only when there were rains, which usually came during the North East Monsoon [generally during October to December]. Unlike the South West Monsoon [June to September], the NE Monsoon does not always deliver that much rain, at least

in the Tamil Nadu [TN] region so, water was always a problem. The water from the dam across Kosasthalayar was taken via a canal to a tank known as Red Hills Lake. By the way, in the very early days, Swami often used to go with His hosts for a picnic to the Red Hills area.

The Basic Problem of Water

In due course other water storage tanks were added, and they were all interconnected. Initially, the water was used both for drinking and for agriculture. Later, most of the water was reserved purely for supplying drinking water, even as the city began to grow. As early as the fifties of the twentieth century, it became clear that growing as it was, and with no major source of water nearby, Madras was going to face a huge drinking water problem. Indeed, every time the rains failed, this problem became a harsh reality, the problems getting compounded as the city grew bigger and bigger.

Concerned citizens and officials did try to think of solutions, and soon it became clear that the only way to solve the drinking water problem was to somehow bring water from the Krishna river flowing up north in Andhra Pradesh. This realisation came quite early, even in the fifties. Conceptually, there was no difficulty in solving the problem – all it needed was a good long canal. As mathematicians would say, a solution existed. In fact a statement was made in Parliament many, many years ago that the Government would do something to solve the problem of drinking water for Madras by taking Krishna water to the city.

But then the human Mind that is so very capable of finding solutions to problems is equally capable of obstructing solutions. What I mean is that the three States through which Krishna flows, had an argument among themselves as to who has rights over Krishna water. The States concerned are: Maharashtra where Krishna rises, Karnataka through which Krishna then flows, and Andhra Pradesh [AP] through which Krishna then makes its way to the sea, namely the Bay of Bengal.

Water Rights

The issue of sharing river waters is always a very sensitive one. A tribunal was set up to address the issue of how Krishna water should be shared and fix the quantum of water to be made available. The Tribunal gave its verdict. Known as the Bachawat Award after the Chairman of the Tribunal, it was agreed that together, the three riparian States would contribute 15 TMC of water from the Krishna river to Madras city to meet its need of drinking water. One TMC by the way stands for a thousand million cubic feet, a term used by the British to quantify water supply for agriculture purposes. It is roughly equal to 30 million cubic metres of water.

One million cubic metres can be visualised by imagining a tank that is 100 metres long, 100 metres wide and 100 metres high. One TMC is equal to 30 such tanks, and Madras was to get 15 TMC.

By the way, it was felt that of the 15 TMC released at the source, about 3 TMC would be lost in transit and the city would end up with 12 TMC which was good enough for meeting its needs. Well, that was what was decided way back in the sixties or seventies, I do not remember exactly.

As everyone knows, there is always a huge gap between intentions and implementations. The Tribunal had given its verdict but now it was up to the administrations in the various States to come together and get going. As is to be expected, there were many hiccups, even as governments came and went, thanks to uncertainties of election politics. Meanwhile, the TN Government floated a big scheme called the Veeranam Project, intended to bring water to the city from the river Kaveri flowing in the South. There was a lot of fanfare, and I was serving then in the Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research in Kalpakkam – this was in the early seventies. The Veeranam Project was a high profile affair but it died in a scandal without a whimper. So, the cloud of uncertainty over the water supply situation in Madras remained as dark as ever.

Finally, several years and many discussions later, in 1983, an agreement was reached to bring Krishna waters to Madras. This was largely through the personal initiatives of the Chief Ministers of Tamil Nadu and of Andhra Pradesh, both of whom happened to be famous film stars before they entered politics. In Tamil Nadu, the man at the helm was the charismatic M.G. Ramachandran, popularly known as MGR, who played Robin Hood in all his films and endeared himself to the masses. In Andhra the top man was N.T. Rama Rao who too was quite popular as a cine star, and absolutely unorthodox where politics was concerned. Interestingly, NTR as the Andhra Chief Minister [CM] was known, had started his career in Madras, because in those days Madras was the only major film city in the South. He thus had a soft corner for the city, and declared that having drunk the water the city for decades, it was his duty to come to its help in its hour of distress.

An Agreement is Reached

Thanks to the bonds created by the tinsel world, MGR and NTR came to an agreement regarding the details of the supply of Krishna water to Madras. At that time, NTR was engaged in launching an ambitious scheme to make massive use of Krishna waters to enhance enormously agricultural production in his State. He was seeking to do this via a grand scheme known as Telugu Ganga, a network of canals that would carry Krishna waters to every nook and corner of the State. As a part of the larger and grand Telugu Ganga scheme, NTR agreed to build a canal from a reservoir in AP, known as Kandaleru reservoir to the border of Tamil Nadu, for bringing Krishna water to Madras.

This canal was to serve a dual purpose; on the one hand, it would bring 12 TMC of water to Madras, and on the other, it would serve as a major irrigation canal for the southern Districts of AP. Of course, NTR was not doing it for free; TN had to shell out a hefty five hundred odd crores of rupees for the execution of this canal as its share. At that time, the exchange rate was

roughly thirty rupees to the dollar, and five hundred crores translates roughly as \$ 160 million, not a small amount by any means.

In the NTR/MGR scheme, the canal from Kandaleru to Poondi would cross the inter-State border at a point called the Zero Point, and from there the TN Government was to construct a 25 km link canal to take the water to Poondi. So, on May 25, 1983, amidst much fanfare, the construction of the Kandaleru-Poondi canal, was formally inaugurated by Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India.

Years passed, and after many crores were spent, on September 29, 1996, the Kandaleru Poondi canal was deemed to have been formally completed and this was recognised with a formal function at the Zero Point with Mr. Chandra Babu Naidu, CM of Andhra and Mr. M. Karunanidhi, CM of TN doing the honours.

Long Canal, But No Water

The shouting and the cheering was over and all was set for water to flow from Krishna to TN. However, in practice, the water that flowed to Chennai was much less than what everyone hoped for and what the Bachawat accord had awarded. Where was the problem? In part, it was the paucity of rain, but the real culprit was the canal itself. It was substandard and it simply could not carry the water released without losses all the way to Madras. It was essentially mud work and therefore there were losses due to leakage and seepage. In addition, in many places, the canal walls had eroded badly. In short, the canal was no canal at all; at best, it was one long, lousy ditch!

Meanwhile, the NE Monsoon failed repeatedly, and Madras, by now renamed Chennai, was really reeling. I believe that H2H has graphically described all this and so I shall not repeat the painful details here. But this much I have to say; the rich and the middle class managed to survive by purchasing water but the poor were left high and dry. They had to scrounge as best as they could and often had to use gutter water in sheer desperation. That was the stark reality of a city that had recently become a big destination for IT.

God Decides to Dismiss the Distress

Man thinks it is God who sends trouble, but God is not like that. He does not add to man's burden; rather, He helps when man is in distress. Where Chennai residents were concerned (by this time, Madras had become Chennai), on January 19, 2002, something dramatic happened. It was the first anniversary of the Super Speciality Hospital in Bangalore and Swami went to Bangalore specially to attend the Health Meet arranged to mark the occasion. There were of course speeches galore and at the end of it all, there was as expected a Divine Discourse. In the course of the Discourse, Swami made a most unexpected announcement. He declared,

"Today I have made a new resolve. Madras is suffering from acute shortage of drinking water. The rich can buy water sold by the tanker services but what

about the poor? They have to depend on rain water that has collected in puddles and ditches, thus spoiling their health. I have therefore decided to work towards bringing drinking water to Madras, no matter how difficult and costly the task is. This wish of mine will fructify without fail. Success always springs from deep conviction.”

By the way, January 19, is the anniversary of Sundaram (Swami’s residence) in Chennai; it was on this day, in 1981, I believe that Sundaram was blessed and formally inaugurated by Swami. The people of Chennai had not formally come to Puttaparthi to pray to Swami for drinking water. But already on October 19, 1997, at the time of handing over the Anantapur Drinking Water Supply Scheme to the people of Andhra Pradesh, Swami had declared that He had no differences of caste, creed, nationality, etc., and was ever ready to help one and all. This day, January 19, 2002, He was telling the people of Chennai: “Why fear when I am here?”

Work started soon. As all of us know, Swami becomes very keen once He gets set on a project. Thus, Bhagavan instructed the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust to get busy and do all it can to make the Kandaleru-Poondi canal world class, so that Krishna water if available, can freely flow to Chennai. Now this canal extends about 150 km on the Andhra side, and about 25 km on the Tamil Nadu side before connecting with the Poondi reservoir near Chennai. Swami instructed the Trust to fix all the problems on the Andhra side, and, as usual, sparing no cost and wasting no time.

Politics Obstructs Solutions

You might ask what about the TN side. Well, Swami wanted to fix that part also, but the then Chief Minister of TN, Ms. Jayalalitha, was, for her own reasons, not enthusiastic about this project. She was floating an alternate project to bring water from Kaveri. Actually, she was trying to resurrect the Veeranam project even though Kaveri water had in the meantime become a huge question mark, besides being much less in quantity. In short, Ms. Jayalalitha was preoccupied with her own project, and bothered little about this solution, though it was promising.

Anyway, under Swami’s Divine guidance, work proceeded swiftly on the Andhra side, and the best technology was employed this time. Some of you might have seen our documentary on the Chennai Water Project, wherein we have captured the highlights of the manner in which the project was executed in a most professional manner, using the best technology available. When Swami does something, it is always nothing but the best.

At this point I should share with you some statistics to give you a feel for the quantum of work involved.

The Statistics Involved in the Chennai Drinking Water Project		
1	Soil Excavation	17,00,000 CM
2	Silt Removal	110, 000 CM
3	Hard Rock Excavation	76,000 CM

4	Stone Masonry Work	18,000 CM
5	Rough Stone Revetment	80,500 CM
6	Cement Concrete Guniting	170,000 CM
7	Cement Concrete Lining	194,000 CM
8	Project Duration	1 Year
9	Total Project Cost	\$ 60 million

I should also quote from an important letter written by Mr. Chandra Babu Naidu, then Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh dated 7 May, 2003, and addressed to Ms. Jayalaitha, then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. Please note the date. Swami made the announcement on January 19, 2003 and this letter was written by Mr. Chandra Babu Naidu on May 7 2003, just about a year later.

CHIEF MINISTER
ANDHRA PRADESH

Dear Dr. Jayalalithaa Garu,

I have just reviewed the works undertaken for improvement of the Kandaleru-Poondi Canal by Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust to facilitate drinking water supply to Chennai.

I am happy to inform you that with the blessings of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the progress of Canal lining work has been both extremely fast and of high-quality. With technical support from the Government of Andhra Pradesh, the Trust has not spared any effort in making this section of the Canal most efficient for free flow of water.

It has been my pleasure to have overseen the completion of drinking water projects executed, in record time, by the Trust in the Districts of Anantapur, Medak and Mahbubnagar in my State.

Based on the above experience and track record, I am confident that the concrete lining work on the Kandaleru-Poondi Canal in vulnerable reaches will be completed by early August 2003.

With the completion of the lining works, Tamilnadu would be able to draw water more effectively and I request you to take appropriate measures, in the meantime, at your end.

Members and representatives of the Trust will be most happy to apprise you about the Project at a time and date convenient to you.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

N. CHANDRABABU NAIDU

Dr. J. Jayalalithaa,
Chief Minister,
Government of Tamilnadu, CHENNAI

Unfortunately, there was hardly a response from TN side to this letter, which is not surprising since Ms. Jayalalitha was busy with her own solution to the Chennai Drinking Water Problem. Be that as it may, I would like you to note at this point, one important fact. The Kandaleru-Poondi Canal took the Andhra Government 13 long years to construct but here was the Central Trust making it world class in just around 13 months! That speaks volumes, does it not?

In 2003, we all thought that after He returns from Kodai, Swami would at some time go to Chennai for a grand inauguration of the Sai Ganga. Nothing like that happened. Instead, Bhagavan, as a part of His unfathomable *Leela*, suffered his first fracture. We fast forward and come to November 23, 2004, the day of Swami's 79th Birthday. On that day, water was formally released from Kandaleru to Chennai. A few days later, water reached the zero point crossing on Swami's Birthday date according to the Telugu calendar. This was a happy event, with Sai Krishna getting the Krishna water released on His birthday according to one calendar and reaching that same water on His birthday according to another calendar! Soon after this, bus loads of Chennai residents converged on Prashanti Nilayam to express their gratitude and some of you might recall that Radio Sai broadcast excerpts from that thanks giving event.

All that was in 2004. We fast forward again, and three years and one election later, Swami finally went to Chennai, because this time, the climate was congenial, shall I say! Swami, of course, went primarily for blessing the Yagna that He Himself had asked to be performed. However, it was widely expected that when Swami does go to Chennai, the city would for sure find a suitable way of expressing gratitude. Many leading citizens came together, and one thing led to another. Soon, the Government entered the act. The first indication we had of that was when Mr. Durai Murugan, Minister for Public Works in the DMK Government of TN came to Puttaparthi for Swami's Darshan. He not only had Darshan but also went to the Hospital to look around personally. He was bowled over. It looks like when he went back, he told his boss, the Chief Minister about it. At this point, I should say something about this Chief Minister, because he has contributed his own share to make this recent visit of Swami a historic one. I make this digression because it would help not only the younger generation but also people in places elsewhere to appreciate the background of the Chennai Citizens' Conclave better.

The Dynamic Karunanidhi and the Rise of DMK

People in South India are very familiar with the Chief Minister [CM] Mr. M. Karunanidhi, popularly known as Doctor Kalam [a reference to the fact that he is a distinguished writer and honoured with a doctorate, *honoris causa*]. Mr. Karunanidhi, now eighty plus, started off fifty years ago as not only a firebrand activist in the Dravida Kazhagam, a party with a strong anti-caste, and anti-Hindu stance, but also as a gifted author and screen-play writer. Karunanidhi shot to instant fame and became a household name in the early fifties, thanks to the powerful dialogues he wrote for the film Prashakti, that became a blockbuster, aided by superb acting of Shivaji Ganesan, who too shot to fame via the same film. It almost seemed that Karunanidhi wrote the film for Shivaji and that Shivaji was waiting for Karunanidhi to give him 'The Film' he wanted to start with.

The Dravida Kazhagam, started by social activist E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker, popularly known as Periyar, was very popular, since it gave many angry young men a platform to ventilate their feelings of dissatisfaction with many aspects of society. But Periyar, for reasons of his own, stayed out of politics; this, however, did not please the young Turks, that included Karunanidhi. At one stage, when Periyar, then seventy plus married a young woman in her mid twenties, it gave a chance for the young Turks to breakout and form their own party, though Periyar continued to be their father figure. This party, known as Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam or DMK for short, entered politics and in 1967 created a sensation by not only sweeping the polls in Tamil Nadu, but, in the process, edged out the Congress which for decades had ruled the State. Since then, Congress has slipped into oblivion while the DMK and its splinter group ADMK took turns in ruling the state of Tamil Nadu. I should at this point mention that Ms. Jayalalitha leads the ADMK. In earlier times, she was a well known film star, and was the protégé of another famous film star, M.G. Ramchandran, whose name I have already referred to.

The Unique Chennai Citizens' Conclave

Many, especially those who are not from Tamil Nadu, might wonder why I am spending so much time discussing politics and all that. There is an important reason for it. Though the meeting held on January 21, 2007 was labelled Citizens' Conclave, all the people on the dais that day, Swami excepted of course, were people from the world of politics. It was a strange coming together of various shades of political opinion [indeed from all across the country] and Divinity. As such, it is important to put the event in its proper perspective, instead of merely cataloguing who spoke first and who spoke next, etc.

It was not merely a case of people with different shades of political opinion participating in the function. The real sensation was the presence of four people from the DMK on the platform - four people from a party that was supposed to be atheistic, and highly critical of religion as well as various religious practices. In particular, given his track record for pungently expressing atheistic sentiments, Karunanidhi, sharing the dais with Swami,

raised many an eyebrow not only in Chennai, but became a national news story. It is therefore important to have a proper background to the entire sequence of events, so that one can understand better how, when the time is ripe, Swami unobtrusively shifts gears and effects changes in a subtle manner.

The Story Behind the Exceptional Conclave

You will recall, the meeting in Chennai was really supposed to be a gathering where grateful citizens of the city expressed gratitude to Bhagavan. The question is: "How come the TN Government came into the picture?" That is an interesting question. At a higher level, the answer is obvious; the time had come, and Swami obviously made things happen the way they were supposed to according to His Divine Drama. Thus, a series of events took place. No one would know all the details, except Swami of course, but in brief, the sequence of events is as follows. Firstly, the TN Minister for Public Works, the department that is in charge of water supply, etc., came to Puttaparthi. He came, he saw and he was conquered. He went back and reported to his boss. After this, the realisation dawned that Baba is the greatest benefactor on earth and that it would not be appropriate for anyone, be it an individual or even a state government, to ignore Him. The TN government began to feel that it would help a lot if gratitude is expressed to Swami for what He has already done, and maybe request Him also to do something to get the TN section of the Kandaleru-Poondi canal done up to the high quality that is now a reality in the Andhra segment.

Meanwhile, Swami Himself announced that the next Ati Rudra Maha Yagna would take place in Chennai. He did not say He was attending it. Everyone expected Swami would, and acting on that assumption, people began to make all sorts of arrangements to receive Swami, and to pay their respects to Him. That was when the idea of the Citizens' Conclave took shape. The Tamil Nadu Government naturally came to know about it because the Conclave planners applied to the government to hire the huge indoor stadium near Central Station for the function. Almost immediately, the TN Government got into the act extending full support in many ways, including in the matter of security, etc. Not just that; the Government very much wanted to be a part of the action, which is how so many TN ministers were present on the dais that day and so many officials were to be seen all around, facilitating the function in every possible way. And to cap it all, on the evening of January 19, if I am not mistaken about the date, soon after we arrived in Sundaram, the members of the Mr. Karunanidhi's family came to Sundaram to personally invite Bhagavan to visit their home, which He graciously did on the 20th, stunning not only Tamil Nadu but indeed the whole of India.

Pure Love Conquers All

As Swami says, in His Divine Drama, things happen when *samyam* and *sandarbham* are right, that is, when the time and the circumstances are just what they ought to be. Thus came the unexpected visit of Swami to Karunanidhi's house on January 20th which completely changed the tone of

the Conclave held on the following day. For nearly fifty years and more, TN, a region seeped for centuries in the tradition of *Bhakti* (devotion) in all its aspects, had been facing some kind of turmoil, thanks to an aggressive socio active movement, which, in the process of crying out loud for much-needed social reform, took a strong atheistic stand in order to highlight evils perpetrated in the name of religion. Such protest movements have come about in all parts of the world, but where TN was concerned, it imposed great hardship on the genuine believers. The appearance of Karunanidhi and Swami on the same stage was an event that few would have forecast as late as end of 2006. Yet it did happen and this was the way Swami sent a signal to all His devotees, that in the end, God does give protection to the faithful. As I mentioned earlier, a climate of hostility to religion had been created in Tamil Nadu, initially by social activists. When later many of these activists entered politics and came to power, the tension and the pressures on the faithful increased manifold. But now, with people in power with strong anti-religious establishment feeling openly accepting and applauding Baba, at least Sai devotees can function and go about their spiritual work without much fear or opposition. That the present Government extended not only much courtesy but also made elaborate police arrangements both to manage vehicle movement and for crowd control, is sufficient indication that Swami has won the hearts of the so-called non-believers, a clear demonstration that Love can and does always triumph.

To get back to the story of the Conclave, soon after the Tamil Nadu Government got wind of Swami's visit to Chennai, it entered into the act and the Conclave took a sharp turn, acquiring an altogether new complexion. Firstly, the people who were invited to speak were almost without exception all drawn from politics. In fact, there were only Chief Ministers, Governors, Ministers from Delhi and Ministers from the States who gathered on the stage to honour Swami! This was hardly expected in the beginning and yet it happened!

The Attractions at the Conclave

As far as the proceedings themselves are concerned, they took place in a large completely air-conditioned indoor stadium named Nehru Stadium built and owned by the Government. Interestingly, this stadium is located not far from the place where in 1983, the construction of the Kandaleru Poondi canal was inaugurated with much fanfare, and 13 years later was a huge flop, after much expenditure, of course. Prior to the event, I have been hearing from many weeks, all kinds of reports about the hectic preparations for this event, and it became clear that it would be a star function attracting attention not only in Chennai and Tamil Nadu but indeed in the whole country.

There were three important reasons for this. First, of course, was the fact that the gathering included such a wide spectrum of political celebrities belonging to political parties with diverging views on almost everything. Secondly, there were at least two charismatic figures on the stage, each a celebrity in his own right; we had the ever ebullient Mr. Lalu Prasad Yadhav of Bihar, who never failed to be the centre of any event he participated in, with his unique style of

speaking and inimitable personality. Then there was Mr. Karunanidhi, once a fire brand and now an elder statesman with a national profile rather than the stature of a mere state politician. Astute, shrewd, very calculative in his moves, and never given to rabble rousing, he is widely seen as one who would not have any truck with anything that even remotely smacks of religion or spirituality. Yet here he was, playing the leading role in expressing thanks to Swami, almost three years after water started flowing into the parched lakes of Chennai. He was daring to do something his predecessor, the actress-turned politician and mercurial personality Ms. Jayalalitha, refused to do, namely express gratitude to a towering benefactor, but for whose help at a critical moment, Chennai would still be in trouble. So it is no surprise that there was a great interest in the Conclave. Attendance was strictly regulated, partly on account of the limited seating capacity and partly on account of security reasons – with so many VVIPs gathering on one stage in one hall, one should not underestimate the headaches the security people were having.

The Indecisive Hours Before the Conclave Commenced

With that background, I am now ready to start describing the events of the January 21, 2007 morning. All of us in Swami's party were staying in Sundaram, which is where Bhagavan also was staying. Our daily routine was roughly as follows. We would all get ready early and await instructions from Swami's room. When the word was out that He was going to the dining hall, all of us would go there too. We sort of had our places earmarked – I shall tell you all about that later – and we would take our seats when given the signal. After that, breakfast, in silence, of course. That morning, all the daily newspapers had been duly lined up at Swami's table, since they were full of news and pictures about Swami's historic visit to the residence of Mr. Karunanidhi the previous evening. People tried to compete with each other in drawing attention to the exciting news, but Swami did not show much interest; in a way, that was to be expected.

Breakfast was soon over and we were all wondering what next. The Conclave was due to start only at 11 am and the big question was: Would Swami visit the Yagna Salai (the Yagna site) first and then go or simply go direct from here. Meanwhile, Mr. Venu Srinivasan, the CEO of TVS Motors, who was to deliver the welcome address at the Conclave, came to Sundaram to seek Swami's blessings. Having received that, he pushed off. Meanwhile, Mr. Shiv Raj Patil, the Union Home Minister, and of course a long-time devotee and Mr. Gokuldas of Bombay showed up in Sundaram, and Swami asked them also to have breakfast. It was interesting that Mr. Patil, a lead speaker in the morning function, chose to come to Sundaram rather than go to the Governor's residence, which he was entitled to do according to protocol.

Swami invited both Mr. Patil and Gokuldas and spoke to them for a few minutes. These two were apparently asked to follow Swami to the Conclave later that morning. Meanwhile, Swami enquired about the morning program, which was His way of getting things into motion. He was respectfully informed that it being a Sunday, there was, as expected, a huge crowd awaiting the

Lord in the Yagna site. Accordingly, Swami decided to go to Yagna site first; after all, He had come to Chennai for the Yagna, had He not? When Swami came out to go to the Yagna site, there was a huge crowd in front of Sundaram and thus, a jam. While Swami's car managed to speed away, most of us got caught in the jam and were thus left behind. Later we made our way to Yagna site; however, it was a difficult exercise since there was no police escort for us! And the Home Minister of India who normally gets a lot of attention from the Police was in our "left-behind" party and he too had to struggle through traffic lights and all that, as we did! Democracy at work! Anyway we finally caught up with Swami and reached the Yagna site.

Arriving at The Venue

Swami stayed there for some time, and our party left for the Conclave venue at 10.30 am. En route, our convoy was briefly stopped. I was amazed since Swami was at the head of our convoy and He was supposed to get all sorts of traffic priority. However, at this particular junction, it turned out that the Governor of the State was headed in a convoy of his own for the Conclave. And by sheer force of habit, the Governor's convoy was given priority! However, the hold up was just about a few seconds, and we were on our way.

For the first time in this trip, we were driving along roads close to the beach. It being a Sunday, a holiday, traffic was generally light. As we drove towards the site, I saw many sights familiar to me; at the same time, I also saw how much things had changed. Soon we were driving along the road adjoining the famous Marina Beach of Chennai. Near the Madras Medical College, which I guess must be close to a century old, we made a turn towards the venue, going past the Central Station and the Rippon Building towards the Nehru Stadium. Interestingly, this venue was barely a stone's throw away from the venue of the inauguration of Kandaluru-Poondi canal in 1983.

As we drove towards to the Stadium, I saw many banners, all in praise of, or welcoming the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. I was not surprised, given the nature of politics these days, especially in States dominated by a tall figure, but certainly pained. Finally, as if to soothe me, there appeared a banner hailing Swami as the Saviour who came to the rescue at a desperate moment.

When the vehicles stopped, we were whisked away by volunteers who were waiting for us. The place was swarming with security personnel, and soon we entered the hall where the function was to be held. Swami says that zeros becomes heroes when they are with the Divine; that was certainly true of us that day, because we were seated in the first row!

The Nehru Stadium – In A New Avathar

When we arrived, I saw in the dais before me a row of chairs with a gap in the centre. It was clear that the centre space was reserved for Swami. Behind the chairs was a backdrop, simple in concept, and with the words 'Water- the Elixir of Life'. There was, of course, also a picture of Swami, nothing else. Later, a Chennai resident told me that this was the first occasion when a

Public Meeting addressed by the Chief Minister Karunanidhi did not have a huge picture of him adorning the stage. I took a quick look around and I could see not only people seated everywhere but also a lot of posters. I could not quite read them – my eyes have become a bit weak for that – but I could easily make out that they all depicted Swami's sayings and Seva. One by one the people meant to be seated on the stage showed up and were escorted to the seat. Obviously, Swami who was already in the building, was resting somewhere behind stage in a private room. And as the VIPs took the stage, they greeted each other and exchanged pleasantries.

Most of the faces up there I could recognise, and soon all the seats were taken except for one, and that was the seat to the left of Swami, meant for Chief Minister Mr. Karunanidhi. Swami then came in His pink Porte car-chair, accompanied by a couple of His boys, and there was naturally a loud applause as He did so. Even as He was being steered to the centre-spot, Karunanidhi walked in, assisted by two people. Age had obviously had its say, and it was obvious he was having difficulty in moving about. His arrival too was greeted with loud applause.

The Historic Occasion Commences...

All the VIPs having assembled and with Swami too taking His position, it was time to get the proceedings under way. The Master of Ceremonies was P. C. Ramakrishna, a fitting choice. I know PCR, once a popular TV newsreader and now a television commentator. His forte was his wonderful voice, that he so graciously has lent to us for many of our documentaries. Tall and with a good bearing, PCR, dressed in simple clothes matching the occasion, moved the mike to take charge; and with what grace and finesse he conducted the proceedings!

As is inevitable in Tamil Nadu, the proceedings commenced with what is called "honouring the guests on the stage". Swami was first offered a rose. Thereafter, it was a ceremony of presenting shawls to the politicians. For each politician, there was a specially designated VIP who would walk up to the VIP concerned, pick up a shawl from a silver tray and then wrap it around the guest. This way, the organisers gave a chance to many a prominent citizen of Chennai to come to the stage and be associated, even if briefly, with the proceedings. The shawl-presentation ceremony naturally started off with Karunanidhi being the first to be so honoured and went on for some time with PCR reading out the names one after the other of the VIP to be honoured. I noticed that PCR had the right words to describe every one of the VIPs being honoured.

Obviously, the VIPs must have enjoyed receiving the shawls, for they were quite expensive ones obviously, but for us on the floor, the proceedings seemed endless. Finally it was all over and the real proceedings started, with an invocation song. Normally, invocation is done via a song in praise of the Lord. But this song, specially composed for the occasion, and rendered in Tamil by Dr. Sirgazhi Chidambaram, son of late Sirgazhi Govindarajan a noted singer, centred around Swami. It was sung with great feeling, to match

the eloquence of the words, pregnant with meaning. The basic theme was: ***We will see God in the smiles of the poor, and the poor will smile when we follow Sai's teachings and adopt His methods.*** In essence, the song conveyed the teachings repeated so often to us by Baba: "Love all, Serve all. Service to man is service to God."

After the song came the speeches, one after another, by all the dignitaries. It was a bit tiresome to sit through them all, but in another sense, they were all revealing. Here is a gist of the more important ones covered by the newspaper The Hindu, dated 22nd January 2007.

CHENNAI: Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil on Sunday stressed the need for adopting a broad-minded approach to find a lasting solution to inter-state water disputes.

Addressing a meeting here organized by Chennai Citizen's Conclave to felicitate Sri Sathya Sai Baba for his contribution to the Telugu Ganga project, Mr. Patil said that although the country was blessed with perennial rivers, people in some areas faced water scarcity.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi drew a parallel between the humanitarian assistance extended by the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust (SSSCT) and the benefits extended by the DMK Government to the poor. When the Krishna water scheme was envisaged, Sri Baba had promised assistance to ensure uninterrupted supply. Mr. Karunanidhi wanted the SSSCT to bear a part of the cost of the project for cleaning the Cooum.

Explaining his sharing a platform with Sri Baba, he said many might raise their eyebrows as to how an atheist could sit next to a spiritual leader. "I always respect genuinely saintly persons who uphold the principle that service to man is service to God," Mr. Karunanidhi added.

Railway Minister Lalu Prasad and Union Minister for Communication and Information Technology Dayanidhi Maran thanked Sri Baba for expediting the project to ensure supply of water to the residents of Chennai.

Tamil Nadu Governor Surjit Singh Barnala commended Sri Baba for extending help for the canal work.

Maharashtra Governor S.M. Krishna stressed the need for giving a thrust to projects for supplying water to the people.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh said the Telugu Ganga project was a shining example of promoting cordial relations with neighbouring States.

Chief Minister of Karnataka H.D. Kumaraswami referred to the age-old ties between the people of Tamil Nadu and his State...

Replying to the felicitations, Sri Baba appealed to the people not to entertain hatred of any kind. "Never hate any religion; never hate any individual," he said.

The last one to speak was the Chief Minister Karunanidhi, and that was the speech everyone in the audience was eagerly looking forward to, including the Media, of course. How was this man, once a virulent atheist and who spared no words when it came to attacking religion and religious practices, and poured scorn over religious heads, going to justify his sharing the platform with Sai Baba. True, Sai Baba had visited his house the previous evening, but being seen with Him in a public function – how was he going to handle it? We did not have to wait for long to know the answer.

Karunanidhi answered precisely the question that was uppermost on all minds, and in a typical fashion, with measured words and careful logic. He started by pointing out to a poster in the hall and said that the poster reminds us that service to man is service to God. If that is the way of pleasing God, then he had no quarrel with anyone who tried to do that. In fact, Sai Baba was doing it in a particular way and he was doing it in his own manner. While Baba was combining service with spiritual teaching, he was combining service with governance. As such, there was no contradiction; same goal but different routes, that is all. In this context, he drew particular attention to the river Kaveri, which near the town of Trichy splits temporarily into two branches, one known as Kollidam and the other known as Kaveri. Karunanidhi pointed out that while the two branches have different names, both carry water which help to irrigate fields and assist the growing of crops from which we get food. Ultimately, said Karunanidhi, it is getting food that it is important and it does not matter whether the water came from the Kaveri branch or the Kollidam branch.

Karunanidhi then made a specific reference to Swami's effort to help Chennai. In this context, playing on words he first said that the three States that surround Tamil Nadu namely Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra all had water [for which the Tamil word is 'tanner'] while Tamil Nadu had water shortage leading to people shedding tears [for which the Tamil word is 'kanneer']. However, through mutual understanding and co-operation promoted by Baba, Tamil Nadu was being blessed with water. Understanding and co-operation alone get us ahead and not fighting, said Karunanidhi. Naturally, there was a very loud applause, when Karunanidhi concluded.

After Karunanidhi finished – by the way, he spoke sitting down – it was Swami's turn. As in Prashanti Nilayam, He was the last speaker. We were wondering whether Swami would speak sitting even as the CM of Tamil Nadu had done; no, He was going to do so standing. The special podium used at the time of the Convocation had been thoughtfully brought, and Swami stood. For a moment there was a flutter as Prof. Anil Kumar, who was patiently waiting on the back stage, came to take his place next to Bhagavan. The TV cameramen could not see Swami and kept on saying, "Translator sir, please

move backward; we cannot see Baba!” Prof. Anil Kumar head their plea and promptly obliged and thereafter, the proceedings went forward smoothly.

After Swami finished, noted film director Mr. K. Balachander proposed a vote of thanks, following which there was the National Anthem. It all started at 11pm and by the time it was all over, I guess it was around 2pm. After that was the ride back, then lunch and all that. So you can imagine how tiring it must have been for Swami that day.

A Rare Sight of Crowd Discipline

And now for some reflections. I have many observations to make, but since I do not have the time and space here to make all of them, I shall confine myself to just a few; the others would come later at an appropriate time.

The first point I would like to make is how smoothly the function went off. For us who are very much used to the serene atmosphere of Prashanti Nilayam, it is impossible to think of any other alternative, but the sad fact is that public meetings in India, especially where many politicians are present and the Media is gathered in full force, are seldom smooth affairs. The best comment on this was offered by Karunanidhi himself. I have it on reliable authority that later that evening, the Chief Minister said to the State Police Chief, “We organise so many meetings but they seldom are peaceful. How come this meeting went on like clock work, with every one seated, none going about here and there, people all sitting silently and listening carefully, with the Police having so little work to do? Why can’t the meetings we organise be like that? Wherein lies the difference?” Now that says a lot, does it not?

Karunanidhi asked about the difference. That difference is made entirely by Bhagavan. When He is present, disorder always gives way to order; and even if there is a bit of crowding or jostling, it is marginal. Somehow, the Divine spell cast by Swami keeps everyone, unknown to themselves, in check. If any proof is needed, just recall some of the recent Sivarathri events, all captured on video tape. How orderly the crowds always are!

Love and Sacrifice – The Powerful Panacea

That macro order is evidence that the Divine can quell undesirable passions if only we would give it a chance. Divine force exerts itself in two ways; one is through direct presence and the other is through subtle presence. Swami’s physical form is the direct presence, and we know what wonderful scenes are witnessed when He is physically around. It happens every time and everywhere. But the Divine cannot, at the human level, be present everywhere all the time. So Swami says, allow the God within to manifest and take charge of your mind and body; then all would be OK. In fact, that was the theme of His message to the Conclave too. What is the expression of Prema except the manifestation of Divine Love latent within? If that Love is allowed to express itself, a good many of the problems we face, both at the individual level as well as the collective level would vanish. Why? Because with Prema comes Tyaga or sacrifice. If there is any one teaching we have to absorb from

the life of the Avatar, it is that Love without sacrifice is meaningless and that sacrifice without Love is impossible.

Today's world is full of problems, and most of those problems have been caused by the aberrations of the human mind. If the human mind can be held in check and made subservient to the Divinity latent within, then peace can reign on earth. Swami's trip to Chennai in 2007 provided any proof if needed that the Divine Love does conquer and prevail. That proof was provided by Swami's external form. All that is needed now is to unleash the Swami within each one of us. If even 1 % of the world's population were to do it, believe me, most of the problems would disappear like the mist before the morning Sun.

Unity to Divinity – Through the Heart

The second point is the strong emphasis Swami laid on Unity. Most of us understand the word unity in a physical sense, meaning people sinking their differences and coming together. This has been tried umpteen times and has never succeeded on a long-term basis. So people tend to get tired of the call for unity, preferring to go their own ways creating more trouble. When Swami talks of Unity, He is calling for Unity based on recognising our oneness with God. Unless we realise that not only are we the children of the same God but are, in fact, aspects of the same God, we would never achieve Unity. When Krishna went to the court of King Dhritarashtra in a last attempt to prevent the disastrous war between the Kauravas and the Pandavas, there came a stage when Duryodhana tried to arrest Krishna and tie Him down. You know what happened then? Krishna made Himself into many and the palace guards saw forms of Krishna everywhere. The guards then simply gave up. In the same way, if we reveal the Divinity within us by becoming united spiritually, the enemies of the human mind would just throw in the towel and beat a hasty retreat. Thus, Swami's call for Unity is of a qualitatively different kind as compared to the calls we regularly hear from politicians and statesmen. That call is not based on the Heart. The only one who speaks the language of the Heart is Swami. So, if the Heart is to be our guide, then we had better listen to Swami!

FEATURE ARTICLES

IN QUEST OF INFINITY – Part 3:

The Birth and Death Of Stars

By Prof G.VENKATARAMAN

Sai Ram and warm greetings again. I hope you are finding this journey exciting. Last time, I introduced you to some facts relating to the birth of our Universe. Today, I would like to tell you something about the birth and death of stars. Stars may not have life the way we have, but there is such a thing as coming into existence of a star, and the end of life as a star. Believe it or not, like us humans, stars too have rebirth! So, there is a fascinating exploration ahead of us.

In the Beginning....

Where humans are concerned, the Bible says it all began with Adam and Eve. In the same way, we must start by discussing how the very first stars in the Universe came into existence. For this purpose, we have to go back to the very beginning of the Universe, namely the so-called Big Bang. I shall skip for the moment the complex sequence of events that took place within the first one second after birth. This first one second is extremely important and incredibly fascinating but for our present purposes, it is better to start after the first one second. So what was the Universe like, when it was a one-second old baby?

First about the size. At the age of one second, the Universe had a radius of roughly 10 billion km [or one thousandth of a light year]; for comparison, the distance of Pluto from the Sun is roughly 6 billion km. Today, the size of the Universe is about 15 billion light years. Just to remind you, one light year equals a distance of 10 trillion km; so today, the radius of the Universe is ten trillion times fifteen billion km! That is a real WOW, is it not? And so, at one second, the Universe was really small compared to what it is today.

OK, now what was the Universe made up of when it was just one second old? Were there stars, planets, etc? None of these. The Baby Universe was made up of electrons and atomic nuclei, that is to say nuclei of simple elements like hydrogen and bit of helium, that is all. For the next several thousand years or so, nothing much happened except that the baby kept on growing, and while this expansion took place, the Universe was basically filled with gas of hydrogen and a bit of helium. Of course, the distribution of the gas was not uniform; in some places there was more and in others there was less; even so, it was gas everywhere, though with varying density.

Gravity Takes Hold

About a million or so years after the birth [by this time the Universe was much bigger] in some places where there was a big concentration of gas, the gas cloud began to shrink. How come? Because of gravity. I suppose you know that gravitational force, discovered by Newton, is an attractive force. Matter attracts matter, and that is what gravity is all about. Now a hydrogen gas cloud is made up of hydrogen atoms and atoms being matter, can attract each other. True, the hydrogen atom is extremely small and therefore its pulling power too is very, very small. And when two atoms are say a million km apart, the attraction may seem nothing to write home about. But this is where Nature stuns us. Thanks to sheer numbers, the little pulls all add up, and eventually the gas cloud behaves as if someone is massively squeezing it from outside. No one really is; what is actually happening is that every atom pulls every other atom and the net result is that all of them start coming closer and closer together. To someone outside, this might seem as if there is a squeeze that is being applied; it is just self-squeeze, operated by gravity.

For the record, I should mention that while gravity pulls inwards, the cloud does try to diffuse due to gas pressure like all clouds do. I am sure you have seen fluffy clouds in the sky becoming bigger through diffusion caused by outward gas pressure and then sort of melting away. However, this gas pressure is peanuts and gravity simply overwhelms it. Gravity is really amazing. It appears weak and insignificant but on the scale of the Universe, it calls the shots because its reach is so long!

OK, so the big hydrogen cloud is getting squeezed more and more. What happens? Does it get crushed into a point? Not really, because something starts happening when the cloud really begins to shrink. You see, the shrinking process is accompanied by a heating process also, the heating being greatest at the centre of the cloud. Now when I say the cloud is getting hot, do not imagine temperatures like what we experience during a hot summer day. Believe it or not, at the centre of the cloud, the temperature can become as high as a MILLION degrees! WOW!! Now that is some temperature, is it not? Of course it is, and sure enough things start happening.

Devices for Thermo-Nuclear Fusion

I must clarify that when I say that the temperature in the compressed gas cloud can go as high as a million degrees, what I mean is that it does so at the core of the cloud. As one moves away from the centre, the temperature starts falling. However, the fact that the temperature rises to a million degrees and above near the centre, makes interesting things happen. Basically, the astronomically high temperature makes hydrogen nuclei to fuse together to form the nuclei of helium. I will skip the details, which belong to the realm of nuclear physics; but this I must say – this coming together of hydrogen nuclei to form helium nuclei is called *nuclear fusion*, and because this fusion of light nuclei to become bigger nuclei is driven by high temperature, it is often called *thermo nuclear fusion*. The important and interesting thing about this nuclear fusion is that it is accompanied by the release of a lot of energy. This energy

then flows outwards towards the outer surface which is cooler – I guess you are aware that heat always flows from a region of high temperature to a region of low temperature. From the surface of the cloud, the energy is radiated into space as heat and light.

To repeat, first there is gravitational compression of the hydrogen gas cloud. This leads to heating, especially at the centre. When very high temperatures are attained, there is thermo-nuclear ignition. This is a process where small nuclei fuse to form bigger nuclei, and in the process heat is also released. This process is sustained and a star is born.

Question: Initially, there was compression that then led to thermo-nuclear ignition. Does compression continue after the ignition is triggered?

No! What happens is that while gravity tries to compress the gas cloud, radiation flowing outwards exerts an outward pressure that tries to expand the gas cloud. So there is a tussle between the inward force due to gravity that tries to compress the gas cloud and the outward force due to radiation [that is substantial] that tries to expand the gas cloud. A balance is reached, then we then have a gas cloud of stable size that is hot at the centre and radiates energy into space.

So that is how a star is born out of a gas cloud that is large and cold to start with. By the way, in a hydrogen bomb, enormous energy is released via thermo-nuclear fusion. However, in the bomb, it is all over in less than a millionth of a second, whereas a star keeps releasing thermo-nuclear energy for millions if not billions of years. Our Sun is thus nothing but a self-sustaining thermo-nuclear device!

OK, a star is born. Will it burn forever or does it have a finite life? If the latter is indeed the case, then how long does a star live? The answer to that is simple. A star is like a burning fire; just as a log of wood would burn as long as there is some wood left, so also a star would burn as long as there is fuel. When the fuel supply starts running down, the temperature starts coming down and cooling starts. Then a whole new ball game starts. That story next.

The Stellar Cycle: Birth, Death And Rebirth

I said that when the fuel gets exhausted, burning or thermo-nuclear ignition stops and the star starts cooling down. Two things happen then. First in the inner regions of the burnt out star, where density is high, gravity begins to dominate and a contraction process sets in. The outer layers on the other hand try to diffuse away like a cloud. So the net result is that the cloud as a whole appears very large from the outside; however, the inner region starts contracting and getting hot once again. By the way, when our Sun “dies” and starts expanding, it is expected to become so large as to extend all the way close to Earth; it would become a real giant with a dull red glow when seen from outside. Astronomers have detected many *red giants*, and that is why the hypothesis is believable.

OK, so we have this red giant, large and thin on the outside but the core contracting and getting hot again. What happens next? That is an interesting story. You see, in the first generation stars, hydrogen nuclei fused to form helium nuclei and when the supply of hydrogen runs down, thermo-nuclear burning stops. That is when the star becomes a red giant with the core again contracting and getting hot. Any likelihood of ignition? Yes there is, and this time the temperature must rise to a level where helium can act as the fuel.

So you see, in the first attempt, the star is a cauldron in which hydrogen is converted into helium. After a “rest” period it starts all over again, with the same sort of story repeating. First there is a contraction due to the influence of gravity, then the core heats, and when the temperature is right, there is thermo-nuclear ignition once more, this time helium nuclei fusing to make up a slightly heavier nucleus, releasing energy in the process. This energy flows outwards and is finally radiated into space. This is the daughter star so to speak. From the daughter is born another star, the grand-daughter so to speak, and so on it goes, generation after generation.

In short, a star is born, it burns, dies, is reborn, dies, is reborn, dies and so on. Every time the star becomes a cauldron where elements get cooked, light elements get fused into heavier elements, and in this way, newer and newer elements that chemistry students learn about came into existence in the Universe.

Discovering What Happens Next

Any end to this process of stars being born, dying, being born again, etc? Yes there is, and that is when the core, after having evolved through many stages is substantially made of iron. Thereafter, thermo-nuclear ignition with continuous release of energy is ruled out by the laws of nuclear physics, and the birth-death-rebirth process stops - there is no more chance of heavier elements being formed through stellar cycles.

You might wonder: “But on earth we find silver, gold, uranium etc., all of which are much heavier than the iron nucleus; where from did they come?” That is a very interesting question to which we shall return may be in the next issue. By the way, I hope you would have noticed how nuclear physics is helping astrophysics. All this understanding of stellar physics through the injection of nuclear physics that I am now describing started happening in the period between 1930 and 1940. This is one remarkable aspect of the development of modern physics. Different specialisations often come together in an amazing and unexpected way to push forward the frontiers of knowledge.

Thus far, what I have told you is the following: For the first million years or so, there were no stars. Thereafter, the first stars were born. They lived for some time and stopped burning fuel inside when the supply of hydrogen became small. After a “rest” period, another sequence of burning started, this time helium [produced in the first generation stars] acting as the fuel. After helium is burnt out, there is again a rest period, and a rebirth in which helium

becomes a slightly heavier element and so on, it is *punarapi jananam* stuff playing out here in the Cosmos!

Question: “What happens to a star when it **finally** ceases to burn?” This is exactly where the story becomes even more interesting!

Subramanyan Chandrasekhar

That story is connected with a famous scientist who started it all when he was a mere eighteen-year old college student. His name is S. Chandrasekhar. He later became a world famous scientist, and won the Nobel Prize too. But as someone said, he did not become great with the Prize; already he was so renowned that it was the Nobel Prize that gained in prestige by getting awarded to him. There is, by the way, a NASA satellite carrying an x-ray observatory in space named CHANDRA, launched in 1996, that has provided spectacular images and insight into stellar physics.

The story of the discovery that young Chandra made goes as follows. In the late twenties of the twentieth century, Chandra was a Physics Honours student in Presidency College in Madras. His uncle, Sir. C.V. Raman, who had studied earlier in the same college, had become world famous with his discovery of the Raman Effect for which he won the Nobel Prize in 1930. Chandra was clearly out of the ordinary, and even when he was a student, he had already published a scientific paper, unusual in India then, and indeed even now.

Chandra was totally focussed on physics and received as a prize a book entitled ***The Internal Constitution of Stars***, written by the famous English astrophysicist, Arthur Eddington. The best way of describing Eddington’s stature would be to say that he was then the David Beckham of astrophysics! This book made a deep impact on young Chandra and got him to think intensely about stars and problems in astrophysics. That was when an event happened that was to change his life.

On Raman’s invitation, a famous German Physicist named Arnold Sommerfeld, who was a master teacher and who nursed nearly half a dozen Nobel winners [!] in Munich, was visiting India in 1928, and giving lectures in various places. One of his stopovers was Madras, and there in the Presidency College, Sommerfeld gave a lecture on the newly emerging quantum physics and its implications. Chandra of course was present in the audience, but one wonders whether anyone in the audience, Chandra being the exception, followed what Sommerfeld spoke about.

Leaving for Cambridge

After the lecture, Chandra who was then thinking a lot about stars had a meeting with Sommerfeld and asked him many questions. There was one particular problem that preoccupied him most and when, after studies were over, his father asked him to appear for a competitive examination that would qualify him for a big government job, Chandra flatly refused – thank God he

did! Instead, he headed for Cambridge, then the Mecca of Physics. And Cambridge, by the way, was where Eddington was at that time.

The year was 1930. In those days, there were no jet planes, and one had to travel to England by ship. The journey took about two weeks, and to keep passengers engaged, the Captain of the ship usually organised all kinds of games and parties. Young Chandra, however, kept himself busy thinking about what happens to stars when they finally end their lives.

Now there are a class of astro-objects known as White Dwarfs. They are supposed to be dead stars, that is, stars where thermo-nuclear ignition has totally ceased; in other words, a White Dwarf is really a stellar corpse. Chandra was interested in the physics of White Dwarfs. The interesting thing about a White Dwarf is that matter there is very dense. You want to know how dense? Imagine taking a small piece of material from the White Dwarf, about the size of a tennis ball. That small piece would weigh as much as 25 elephants! That is some density, is it not?

What Chandra did on board was to think hard about the physics of White Dwarfs, and this he did via his favourite way, writing down complex mathematical equations and cracking them. In the process, Chandra made a discovery. It was kind of weird, and Chandra was not too sure. He would have to analyse more carefully, and then check and cross check; all that was going to take time.

The Problem of White Dwarfs

Chandra landed in England and enrolled in Cambridge as a student. In between his regular work as a student, Chandra kept himself busy with his obsession, constructing a proper theory for White Dwarfs. Now White Dwarfs are not fictitious objects. Astronomers **had** detected such objects in the sky, and they suspected that these White Dwarfs were the corpses of stars that had finally come to rest. There arose a question. From the classical physics point of view, when a star finally dies and there is no burning of any sort within, then, given the mass of the star, gravity ought to dominate. If it does, then the star would slowly get crushed more and more and start shrinking. This shrinking would go on relentlessly till the star is crushed to almost a point with infinite density. It seemed as if there was nothing to stop the dead star from shrinking to a point. But the White Dwarfs, which everyone agreed represented stellar remains, did **not** have point size. So clearly, something was stopping gravity in its relentless crush. What was that force and how did it operate? That was one of the major problems of the day.

Now words like a geometrical point, infinity, etc. are OK in mathematics, but in physics, they are not good words. After all, matter is made up of atoms and atoms have a finite size. What then does it mean to say that all atoms are crushed together to be reduced to a point? Physicists were not at all comfortable with the idea of matter getting crushed to a geometrical point. But then, if one accepts classical physics, that fate is inevitable. It was around this time that quantum mechanics had been discovered [1925-1930], and people

said, “Ah, we cannot trust classical physics entirely when it comes to physics in small scales of length. We have to look to quantum physics. Maybe, quantum physics would somehow save White Dwarfs from being crushed to a geometric point.”

Guess what? It did and the way that happened was pointed out by Fowler of Cambridge. Fowler used Fermi-Dirac statistics [that Sommerfeld explained to Chandra in Madras] to argue that quantum physics did intervene and save the dead star from the fate of being ruthlessly crushed to a geometric point. By the way, the term Fermi-Dirac statistics is shorthand for the mathematical description of how electrons in large number behave, when huddled close to each other. Fowler pointed out that thanks to the quantum nature of electrons and their allegiance to Fermi-Dirac statistics, when matter is crushed to very high densities [as happens in a White Dwarf], a pressure is generated due to the electrons in the White Dwarf. This quantum mechanical pressure is called *degeneracy pressure* and acts outwards. In other words, in the dead star, while gravity pulls inwards, degeneracy pressure pushes outwards, and there is a tussle. Eventually equilibrium settles in, and the dead star assumes a finite size; it is saved from being reduced to a point. That was Fowler’s finding, and everyone breathed a sigh of relief. Except young Chandra!

Chandra began having doubts about the total validity of Fowler’s theory, even when he was a student. Remember his discussions with Sommerfeld as a student of Presidency College? Chandra essentially asked Sommerfeld: “In a White Dwarf, the density of electrons is very, very high. At such densities, the electrons no doubt obey Fermi-Dirac statistics. But since the density is high, the electrons must also obey Einstein’s Relativity; however, Fowler’s analysis ignores the relativistic aspect of electron behaviour. Should not the application of quantum statistics be combined with appropriate relativistic considerations?” It would seem that Sommerfeld said yes, adding that such an analysis would be worthwhile. That was the line of investigation Chandra started and kept at for years, even while he was going through the mill, to meet his routine obligations as a student.

Chandra Unveils His Masterpiece

In Madras, Chandra was alone; there was no one there other than him interested in astronomy and physics nor understood it in depth. In Cambridge, however, it was very different; all the top shots were there, including the great hero, Eddington, and of course, Fowler too. So Chandra worked hard for five years, perfecting his theory of White Dwarfs, checking every detail – he was always like that, perfect and ever meticulous – and finally had his theory all ready. All that now remained was to formally unveil the theory. And the opportunity for it came in January 1935.

That month, there was to be a meeting of the Royal Astronomical Society in London. These meetings were big affairs, with top experts attending and presenting the outcomes of their scholarly researches. Chandra was given half an hour; that was arranged by Eddington himself. But what Eddington had

failed to tell Chandra was that he also was going to speak, and about Chandra's theory!

The day was January 11th, and Chandra went to London fully charged up. He spoke, a young unknown Indian, and sat down. I suppose there was just a smattering of polite applause, though the discovery was phenomenal. I must now say a few words about Chandra's discovery before I go on the rest of the drama surrounding the London meeting.

You will recall that Fowler's investigations showed that dead stars were saved from the fatal destiny of being crushed to the totally unacceptable state of a geometrical point. Chandra's finding showed that if relativity was included in the analysis – and there was no way it could be kept out – then if the collapsing object had a mass less than 1.44 times the mass of our Sun [the mass of our Sun is called a solar mass], the dead star would indeed collapse to a finite size. But if the mass of the dead star was 1.44 solar mass, then according to Chandra's analysis, nothing can save that dead corpse; it had no option but to shrink to a point, whatever that meant!

One might ask: "OK, agreed that a dead star of mass 1.44 times the solar mass shrinks to a point. What happens if the dead star has a mass greater than 1.44 solar mass, say five times or ten times the solar mass. After all, such stars do exist. What would their corpses be like?" Chandra himself anticipated this question in his lecture and said, "A star of large mass cannot pass into the White Dwarf stage, and one is left speculating on other possibilities." At this point, the physics of dead stars becomes mighty interesting, but let me put that on hold, till I finish with the great drama of 11th January, 1930.

Opposition to the Theory Grows

After the "kid" finished giving his paper and sat down, Eddington, the "giant" stood up with much relish, and started to tear down the "stupid" theory. Actually, Eddington relied on his stature and rhetoric rather than on hard science. But people listened to him because he was a top shot. Mercilessly he tore down Chandra's theory, cracking many jokes in the process. The audience roared with laughter. Along the line, Eddington even cast aspersions on quantum mechanics. He could get away with it then, because quantum mechanics was still new and even Einstein was suspicious of it at that time.

Getting back to Chandra, he was completely shattered by the experience. He simply did not expect that Eddington would demolish him down like that in public. They had met so many times back in Cambridge; why did he not discuss his reservations then? Where was the need to humiliate a young student like that in public?

After the meeting, Chandra talked to a few who had attended the meeting. Some sympathised, while some others preferred to side with Eddington; few cared to examine the scientific merits of the two arguments. Chandra then wrote to many big shots all over Europe; most sympathised privately but

refused to come out in the open and do so. Meanwhile, Eddington went to America where he said, speaking in Harvard,

“All seemed well until certain researches by Chandrasekhar brought out the fact that the relativistic formula put the stars back in precisely the same difficulty from which Fowler had rescued them. The small stars cooled down alright and ended their days as dark stars in a reasonable way. But above a critical mass, ...heaven knows what becomes of it [the star]. That did not worry Chandrasekhar; he seemed to like stars to behave that way, and believes that that is what really happens.”

Let us get back to the rest of the story of the fateful January 11th meeting. As I told you, after the meeting, young Chandra felt utterly demolished, with a few sympathising with him, some very critical, and most astronomers totally indifferent. Let us hear Chandra recall those moments. He says:

“I had gone to the meeting thinking I would be proclaimed as having found something very important. Instead, Eddington made a fool of me. I was distraught. I didn’t know whether to continue my career.

I returned to Cambridge late that night, probably around one o’clock. I remember going to the common room. There was still a fire burning, and I remember standing in front of it and repeating to myself, “This is how the world ends, not with a bang but with a whimper.”

A True Frontiersman

The story does not quite end here, though round one certainly went to the giant, Eddington. Chandra got his degree and had to decide what to do next. He wanted to stay in England and work perhaps as a lecturer somewhere, but the shadow of Eddington would stretch everywhere and he was not sure if he would get a job. So he decided to leave England and go to America, where he was offered a position at the University of Chicago. There he stayed for the rest of his life, and rose to become a Distinguished Professor. Later, the University actually created a Chair named after Chandra. Reflecting on his migration, Chandra later said,

“I had to make a decision. Am I going to continue the rest of my life fighting or change to other areas of interest? I said, well, I will write a book and then change my interest. So I did.”

In fact, this became Chandra’s style throughout his life. He would enter an unknown area, literally create a new subject, write a scholarly book on his research, and move on to discover a new field. He did this time and again, blazing trails all the time. He was basically a loner, very disciplined, very meticulous, very thorough in everything he did, including in the way he dressed, the way he ordered meals in a restaurant [he was a vegetarian till the end], and in the way he “enjoyed” music. Martin Schwarzschild, an astrophysicist at the Princeton University says:

“Chandrasekhar’s concentration is unbelievable. He combines sheer mathematical intelligence and phenomenal persistence. There is not one field in which he has worked where we are not now daily using some of his results.”

Chandra collected innumerable awards, and about how he got them, he once narrated a story. It seems there was a General who had won many awards and medals. As you know military officers wear their medals over their uniform; so did this General. Once when the General went to a party, a young lady came by and started admiring the medals. She then asked, “General! How did you win all these?” The General smiled, pointed to a tiny medal in the middle and said, “Do you see this medal? I was awarded this by mistake, and after that, all the others followed!” That was Chandra, very focussed on his work and making light of his awards.

Chandra lived to eighty plus and worked hard till the very end, preoccupied with frontier problems in astrophysics. Almost single handed, he built up the famous journal, *Astrophysical Journal*, a peer journal in the field of Astrophysics. When he stepped down from the Editorship, there was a small party at which the man in charge of the Press [a typical, no-nonsense, hard-core American] said, “We have printed many papers dealing with the so-called Chandrasekhar limit. I do not know what that means, but as far as I am concerned, this Prof has no limits where work is concerned.”

The Birth Of A New Physics

So much for the interlude about the great drama involving Chandra and what followed. Let us get back to the science before we wrap up this segment of our joint quest. We start with a star that is dead; there is this corpse and it has a certain mass. It now starts shrinking in size, crushed relentlessly by gravity.

Question: “What would be the radius of the final object?” Classical physics said zero, a result unacceptable. Then came Fowler of Cambridge who said that quantum degeneracy pressure would save the corpse from the fate of vanishing to a geometrical point. True, the larger the mass, the smaller would be the size of the end object, but beyond a certain mass, the final size would be more or less the same, irrespective of the mass of the collapsing object. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief. And then along comes a young upstart from India, and sitting there in Cambridge, right under the nose of the famous Eddington, he dares to say, “Ah, but you see, Fowler forgot to build relativity into his analysis. If that is included, we get a different story altogether.”

Chandra’s finding was, yes, the star starts shrinking to a smaller and smaller radius, once “it runs out of gas.” The larger the mass, the smaller is the radius of the final object/corpse. That was the finding of Fowler too; but here is where Chandra and Fowler differ. Whereas Fowler said that beyond a point, all dead stars, no matter what their mass is to start with, settle down to more or less the same final radius. Chandra said NO! When the dead star has 1.44 solar mass to start with, the final radius actually becomes zero. Maybe Nature will not tolerate a zero radius corpse and many other things might intervene to

prevent the corpse from having that fate. But Chandra asserted that Fowler's version is not the end of the story, that relativity has a role to play and that his version of the story of stellar corpses is the first chapter in a new and exciting story in the life and death of stars. I shall reserve for later narration what happens to stars with large mass when they die. But this much I can say at present – Chandra's investigations started a whole new and most exciting ball game; watch out for all that in the next issue!

Getting back to our young hero who was badly bruised when he made his shy debut, way back in 1930, few believed in Chandra and those who did, did not dare or care to speak out openly because of Eddington's stature. When the Pope says NO, who can stand up to the Pope even if he is wrong? But TIME proved that the Pope was utterly wrong and that Chandra had actually opened a new door leading to a fascinating vista [all that next time]. Before I conclude, I must get back to the relationship between Chandra and Eddington.

You will recall, when Chandra was still a mere college student, he won Eddington's book as a prize which did much to stir his interest in astronomy and astrophysics. Later in Cambridge, Eddington actually stood in the way of Chandra's research and literally drove him out of England. However, Chandra and Eddington continued to exchange letters, mostly of a personal nature and when Eddington died in 1944, Chandra said, speaking in a memorial meeting in the University of Chicago:

"I believe that anyone who has known Eddington will agree that he was a man of the highest integrity and character. I do not believe, for example, that he ever thought harshly of anyone. That was why it was so easy to disagree with him on scientific matters. You can always be certain that he would never misjudge you on that account. That cannot be said of others."

In 1982, Cambridge University invited Chandrasekhar to deliver a series of lectures on the occasion of Eddington's centenary. Chandra titled his lectures: ***Eddington: The Most Distinguished Astronomer of His Time***. Isn't that amazing that the very person who suffered most at the hands of Eddington was asked to give these lectures? But it is not surprising that Chandra praised Eddington handsomely; for him, the disappointment of the past was over and done with a long time ago.

Well this is where we must part company until we meet again. Meanwhile I invite you to reflect on the wonderful mysteries the Lord has packed into our beautiful Universe. I am sure you would agree that the Lord is stunningly beautiful and so also is His Universe, every bit of it.

Jai Sai Ram.

THE SAI MOVEMENT IN URUGUAY

Unique Uruguay

It may be the second smallest country in South America (with less than one hundredth of the continent's area), but it attracts more visitors per capita than any other South American state. There is something truly unique about this tiny state, Uruguay, located in the south east of the continent on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean. Maybe it is the 500 km pristine coastline which is one white long sandy beach, occasionally interrupted by dunes, pine, acacia and eucalyptus trees; or could it be its fashionable summer resorts and tranquil beach-towns?; or is it its charming colonial towns and fortresses?; or its vibrant art, music and jazz festivals which draw large crowds?; or is it the pull of its inviting hot springs, serene natural forests and captivating hilly interiors?; or could it be because of its interesting capital, Montevideo, a city with a quality of life enviable even in the developed world?; or is it just its magical climate with no extremes of temperature coupled with an absence of natural calamities, abundant supply of water and miles and miles of greenery? Well....it is not any one of these, not even the sum of all these; it is all these together and much more. And what is that 'extra' that makes Uruguay exceptional? In two words – the People.

Yes, the indomitable sense of freedom, fiery spirit and at the same time the warmth and large-heartedness that the inhabitants of this land have demonstrated for centuries is rare to find. When Spanish invaders came to occupy it in 1516, they were repelled bravely by the people of this land and Spain could succeed only in having very limited settlements. This gallantry in combat is what has made the Charrúa Indians (Uruguay's most important indigenous tribe) famous. In fact, even today one can find war-weapons and utensils used by the original inhabitants in the National Historic Museum in Montevideo, the country's capital. One of the noteworthy facts about this nation (officially called the Eastern Republic of Uruguay) is that since 1825, when it gained independence from Brazil, the country has remained a democratic republic, apart from a very small intermission of few years. By far, it is the most politically stable republic in Latin America.

Dynamic Development

This political stability has bestowed it great benefits starting with a progressive economic prosperity to a rich and lively sustained cultural activity. It is for this reason that the country has become home to thousands of immigrants. 94% of its population is of white European descent comprising of Spaniards, Italians, British and German to Croatians, Greek and Armenians. Over the years the country has grown in every sense. Demographically, it has a large middle class and a literacy rate of 97%, comparable to any developed country in the world. Economically, it is very resilient with its investment-grade sovereign bond rating staying intact in spite of severe trade shocks. And in recent years, Uruguay, tapping its advantage of nearly three million literate people has shifted its focus into the IT sector and now has become an important software exporter and outsourcing hub in Latin America. On the

education front, in 1875 itself, it had public schools which offered free, secular education for the first nine years, a program which continues even to this day. Between 1965 and 1985, the enrollment in secondary school grew from 44% to 70%. Today its universities are known for their high quality of education, notable among them being the University of the Republic, Uruguay.

Spirit of Liberty

With all these developments, Uruguay is still a country of soft gentle hills and large green pastures. Gifted with four river basins or deltas, agriculture has always been the country's mainstay. Uruguayan rice is a major export commodity. Apart from this, given its temperate climate and predominantly gently undulating landscape, cattle-raising and wool-harvesting are among its principal occupations. There is no doubt that the "gaucho" (cowboy) is the character that has had the greatest influence on Uruguayan society. His origin is found in the 18th century from the white or "mestizo" (half-breed) that used to live free in the plains, surviving from nature's abundance. They were excellent riders that became famous for their independent spirit. No wonder that the gaucho has become the symbol of this country which has as its motto "Liberty or Death".

This idea of liberty flows to every field of activity in Uruguay, including music and sports. Its music is a grand confluence of African beats, Spanish guitars and American rock and jazz. The country shares with Argentina, the credit of creating the Tango, the scintillating dance-and-song art style which has become an indelible part of its culture. And in sports, football rules the roost, though rugby and basketball are also popular. The country has two Olympic gold medals in football. In fact, the First World Cup in football which was held in a specially constructed stadium in its own capital, Montevideo. It would be interesting to mention here that Montevideo, incidentally, is the capital, largest city, as well as the chief port of Uruguay. In fact, it is considered as a 'primate city' (just like London, Paris or Tokyo) given that it is more than twice as large as any other city in the country.

But more than all these achievements and fascinating facts, the most salient fact about this nation is that, though it is pint-sized, its people are large-minded and warm-hearted. This is precisely the reason why it attracts hordes of tourists every year. Even grander than this is its spiritual dimension. The commitment to ethical principles in this sixty-percent Roman Catholic country is commendable. To its credit, it is the second least corrupt country in Latin America (the first being Chile).

Sathya Sai and the Uruguayans

Having said all this about this beautiful country, it would be fascinating now to know how and when did Sai enter this principled nation? And what impact did it have in the lives of Uruguayans?

It was in 1980 that the first Sai Group began to function in Barra de Carrasco in Montevideo. Sometime later, in September, 1985, Mr. Leonardo Gutter and

Mrs. Mónica Socolovsky from Argentina came to Uruguay and gave official sanction to create the first Sai centre.

“How Sai Came Into My Life”

There were not many devotees in Uruguay then, but slowly and steadily the immense love of Sai was finding place in the hearts of the people who had taken the first steps towards Him. To give an instance, here is Ms. Julia's story; she says,

“It was the year 1987. The Lord's hands were over me. I had just lost my elder daughter and was searching for some therapeutic help for my younger daughters to help them overcome this difficult moment. During those times I assisted at the Sivananda Centre, a master whom I still adore. Still, somehow my heart longed for something beyond, for someone who would be “the Master” for me, though my love for Sivananda has not diminished since.

The doctor who attended on my daughter Florencia, spoke constantly of Sai Baba to her in my absence and when I went to meet him eager to know about my daughter's progress, he spoke fondly about Sai Baba to me too for a long time. Reluctantly I agreed to visit the newly inaugurated Sai Centre of Montevideo. My first visit to the Centre happened to be during the devotional group singing session and the moment I entered the place and saw an image of Baba, I fell at His feet. I can say that I just fell in love with Sai in the best sense of the word and my heart was full of love. From then on, not only had I found the Master of Masters, but also Him who would soothe my sufferings.

Some time after this incident a devotee of Uruguay was traveling to India and I wrote and sent a letter to Baba. What I wished and requested in that letter, was fulfilled within a few years and was also confirmed by Him in a darshan in the year 2002.”

Sai Inspired Service

As more and more such Uruguayans found ‘their master’ and ‘their refuge’ in Sai, the number of devotees only grew and now they wanted to transform their devotion into service for the needy. That is this best way they thought they could express their gratitude to their beloved Swami. When Montevideo's Centre was formally registered with the name “Centro Sai de Montevideo Este” at the corresponding Culture Ministry of Uruguay on January 29, 1988, it only helped the devotees to organise themselves better in offering selfless service. They started with a few activities like assisting at an old age home, helping poor and impoverished children of the streets, donating clothes, food, etc. In fact, for the past seven years, Narayana Seva (offering food to the poor) has been going on every Sunday for people living on the streets by the devotees of the Montevideo Sai Centre.

One of the youth who is an active participant in this service says: “It's not only about taking food to them, they often prefer to talk with us rather than eat. It is then that I realized the basis of everything is Love - the Sai Love we take to

them is all that matters. Without that Love, there is no service at all. One day Mr. Olmedo, who lives in his little cardboard house, told us, 'I would like to tell you that I hope you'll always be present in my life.' In those moments, we realized that we needed him as much as he needed us."

Many years ago, when a long standing devotee of Swami, Dr. Fanibunda, a dentist from Mumbai, asked, "Swami, what is the role of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organization in Your mission?" To his utter amazement, Bhagavan said, "Nothing." He was startled. Looking at Swami, he continued, "Swami...nothing?" Swami confirmed, "Yes...nothing." Dr Fanibunda couldn't help but ask the question: "Swami, then why is there such a huge organization setup?" Swami explained, "It is only for your *chitta shuddhi* – purifying your heart."

And this is exactly what was happening in Uruguay. The people who were served were being benefited more than the people who were served. The transformation it was bringing in the hearts and minds of people was heartening. The devotees helped anybody who asked for help without any distinction. When a priest sought the help of Zulma, a Sai devotee from the Sai group of Juan Lacaze (a city in the Colonia department of Uruguay), she lovingly obliged. And in the process she was greatly rewarded. Recounting her experience, she says,

"In 1990 a priest saw the need of a centre for the physically and mentally handicapped in our community. I was called with three other people to select those who really needed to be served and would remain as the users of the Centre. We started to face all the difficulties one generally encounters in such work from monetary constraints to lack of specialised expertise in handling such type of disabilities.

Thanks to three institutions who gave us all possible help, we realized that we would have to rehabilitate the disabled persons at the social as well as the functional level. We had to give some kind of occupation to the members of the institution. We were contacted by someone who had perfected the art of making of brushes and assembling of notebooks. We chose the workshop on construction of brushes for sweeping floors. After years of hard work, we managed to sell these to various co-operatives and businesses.

In 1996, I had a meeting with Sai Baba in my first trip to India, at a time when the work had receded a lot due to various circumstances. But at the end of my trip, I had become transformed with love and energy flowing towards the need to serve. It is then that my life-force was turned towards the Centre for Help for the Disabled. For me, it was the third time that the Divine presence was felt.

Today we have legal standing and twenty three people are being served by the teachers; there is a technical team to provide help in the areas of sociology, social assistance, physiotherapy, singing, physical education, yoga, handiwork and painting - all by His grace.

In the year 2001, the Sai Group in Juan Lacaze was formed after my return from seeing the beloved Avatar in my third trip to India, and today the people who form the group, work with me in the Centre for Help to the Disabled. With the help of the Sai Centre we attend to the needs of the physically and mentally challenged based on the teaching of Sai: Service to Man is Service to God. And the activities received greater momentum when, in 2006, the Sai group gained official status.”

Another important initiative taken up by the Sai devotees was the setting up of the Sathya Sai Baba Blood Donors Club in February 2004. This has played a great role in saving many lives and has provided a beautiful opportunity for the volunteers to offer “Liquid Love”.

EHV Takes Roots, Ennobles Minds

While the Seva activities were gathering momentum in the late eighties and early nineties, the Education In Human Values (EHV) programme too grew simultaneously. The earliest introduction to EHV for the Uruguayans was in 1987, when a Sai brother from Argentina came to Montevideo and presented the Sri Sathya Sai Human Values Programme. There were many teachers, directors and supervisors who were very interested then in the Program, but at that time there was no possibility to have a course for them as there were no trained devotee-teachers for the Program. But their enthusiasm was high and it found expression in conducting Bal Vikas classes for small children. In the early nineties, there was a cohesive Bal Vikas Group in the Centre of Montevideo. This program gradually expanded through presentations and workshops in various institutes and everywhere the program went it received an encouraging response. In the meantime, the divine in His own incredible way was preparing personnel who at the right time would steer this programme to its glorious heights.

In her first trip to India, one Uruguayan devotee was listening to a Divine Discourse in Prasanthi Nilayam. As usual, Swami’s discourse was in Telugu. But, this devotee could understand Bhagavan’s golden words. It was a real miracle! And she was so amazed and inspired by this blessing, that from that moment on, she dreamt of great accomplishments in Sai Education, which were finally organized in Uruguay and benefited several South American countries.

We know, one of the principal theories on which the EHV programme’s work is ‘practice and then preach’. It invites the teachers and EHV trainers to first live the message before advocating it to others, because Youth and children learn more from what they observe than what they hear. And Swami is always there guiding the teachers and goading them to perfection in His own inimitable way. Sharing her inner transformation steered by Sai, Ms. Maria Delia, says,

Transformation from Within

"I remember the month of March 1990 as something a long time ago. I was immersed in a profound depression, seemed like drowning in a never ending well of thoughts. I questioned myself many a time, what was my role in this life? Why did I exist? Who needed me and who cared about me? I had lost my self-esteem and was seeking, but with my heart closed. One day, I pleaded 'for a sign' to something superior - and that is when Sai Baba appeared in my life.

Surprisingly enough, a handout of the Sai Baba Centre landed in my hands. One Sunday I decided to visit that place. The devotional songs in Sanskrit and Indian languages touched my heart profoundly and even without understanding a word, I knew a lot of positive energy vibrated around the devotees who had so lovingly revived me that day. I discovered that here was 'the sign' that I had asked. I just wanted to be there, and then return again and again to that vibrant energy which was so loving and sublime - and till today I enjoy the same.

Since then, feeling that divine nectar that is the presence of God, knowing little by little about my own errors, my mistakes, working on them and eradicating them has been my way. Now I know that discipline, order, responsibility, being non-violent, and having love for all, blesses us to transform for the better. These qualities expand our consciousness internally to receive benefits of peace and harmony.

Many years passed and sharing in the activities of the Centre I learnt a lot. But there was something that I had to work on and that was my anger. I spent a lot of years trying to eradicate it from my life, I suffered, cried and after various intents of trying to surmount this defect, when I believed that I had overcome it, Swami had a test ready for me and 'zap' there it would re-appear.

When I said, 'Swami, I give You my anger', my temper went on disappearing; I hurt many and repented later. I thought I could control this weakness, but nothing worked until I gave it away to Swami. In His messages, Swami says 'Give me all your miseries and doubts'. I realized that until I understood this and practiced the same, I wasn't going to be without my anger.

In another period I had be operated upon and risked losing my life. I dedicated my life to Him and said, 'Lord, You know why this is happening to me, what you decide will be the best for me, whatever be the result.' It so happened that my recovery was a total success, nobody ever wanted to believe that I had been operated and successfully sent home. During all of the treatment of three and a half months, I would repeat the Gayatri mantra and after five years the medications were stopped. Ten years have passed since this incident and I am hale and healthy. Remembering Him at all times, let's always be happy."

Creating Human Values Endowed Teachers

As such personal transformations were taking place in the minds and hearts of people, it only created the right people the EHV program needed to take it to the next level. The quantum jump in EHV development came in 2000, when a group of motivated devotees decided to prepare themselves to instruct various teachers in the Sri Sathya Sai Education in Human Values Program. And since then many teachers have been qualified in the EHV programme.

The experience of the educators who have contacted the SSSHVE has been universally positive. They say, "We are able to live in their own lives the truth of Baba's words that we can transform ourselves only by the practice of human values."

But 'who gives and who receives?' This is the question the egoless brothers and sisters who facilitated the course ask. Their inner growth is so intense that it is difficult to discern who is the giver and who is the receiver. The whole concept of EHV is based on love, unity and service, and the trainers were 'living examples' of these principles.

As the EHV movement grew on the shoulders of such inspired souls, the need for EHV teachers increased manifold. It was therefore decided to have a sustained two year course on Human Values Program training for teachers, which was conducted in the Montevideo Centre in the year 2000. In the same year, when information arrived about a Human Values Conference being held in Prasanthi, the Uruguayan Sai Organization sent a well known school teacher, Mr. Héctor Florit, to attend the Conference.

It would be interesting to mention that it was also the year when Swami inaugurated the Sri Sathya Sai Mirpuri College of Music and contributions of typical instruments for the Music Museum were welcome from all countries. Uruguay took this opportunity and sent three different drums (Afro-Uruguayan) for the Museum. Not only that, one of the musicians from Uruguay, a symphonic percussionist, was also part of the Worldwide Orchestra which performed in the divine presence in Prasanthi Nilayam on Bhagavan's 75th birthday.

When an Educare Conference was held in Prasanthi Nilayam in 2001, the National Coordinator of Uruguay, Mrs. Ada Fernández, participated in it on behalf of the Uruguay Sai devotees. Inspired by Swami's emphasis and direction, the devotees in the same year started the second Human Values Program teachers' training Course. The graduates of these EHV courses have become invaluable resource-persons who have implemented this unique program to great success. Success begets success, they say. And this is exactly what has happened with the EHV program in Uruguay. The last training course held was in May 2005 in which more than 70 people participated and learnt the principles and practices of Human Values over three months.

Sai Youth Leading the Way

Be it the EHV program, the service activities or any other spiritual activity, if all of these are flourishing today in Uruguay, it is primarily because it is ably supported and at times steered by the energetic Sai Youth. The Uruguayan Sai Youth are known for their dedication and sincere adherence to Swami's teachings. Since the first Latin American Sai Youth Camp organized in Argentina in 1997, the Sai Youth of Uruguay have been active participants of all Youth Camps and Retreats. In fact, the fourth Latin American Sai Youth Camp in 1999 was organized in Uruguay itself. Two years later, when the Camp was held in Paraguay in 2001, more than 20 youth attended and benefited from it.

One of the important programmes handled by the youth is the Teen Youth Sai Program. During 1999 and 2000, the youth visited a State National Home (INAME, INAU nowadays) for children up to four years old every first Sunday of the month and spent time with them singing and playing, apart from giving snacks and gifts. The Manual for the Teen Youth Sai Program that the Youth brought out was considered comprehensive and special, and therefore was translated into Spanish in 2001 and 2002. Once in Spanish, it helped youth in many countries of Latin America to adopt similar kind of service activities.

Always enthusiastic, the Uruguayan Sai Youth, in 2001, hit upon a novel idea. They decided to create unique 'Human Value Post Cards' and distribute freely to disseminate Swami's teachings. Funded by the members of the Youth Program, these cards were placed by the Youth in specific places (previously authorized) where young people would normally be found, like universities, colleges, discotheques, pubs, etc. The youth had selected appropriate Sai messages, which emphasized universal love and human values accompanied by suitable images, which made the cards compelling to look at. A massive 4,140 post cards were delivered in Montevideo, and other parts of the country, during the months of October and November. If one were to document what inner changes and transformations these little messages of love and peace brought about in the lives of the chance-recipients of these cards, we are sure, it would be a fascinating tale.

The Youth have been always in the forefront in all the activities of the organization. After the Sai Latin American Youth Camp in Peru in 2000, many Youth committed themselves to become trainers in the Sathya Sai Human Values Education Program. By end of 2001, every youth in the Program had finished the training and were ready to work with children and adults. Later, Ms. Ada Fernandez Chagas, was trained in the Institute of Sathya Sai Education, Malaysia to coordinate the Teen Youth Program in Latin America.

When she returned from Malaysia, the Sathya Sai Youth Program formed five groups to collaborate in the translation of the Manual of the Sathya Sai Teen Youth Program at the Sai Centre Montevideo, having the support of adult devotees. In 2002 this extraordinary Program was presented to people through the practice of the different techniques with a group of non-devotee youth from La Floresta resort in Canelones.

The Sai Youth Program is always live and active. Since 2004, the youth hold meetings every last Sunday of the month for teens in the Montevideo Sai Centre. And every passing year there are more inspired youth joining the Human Values Education course held in Montevideo to be trained as Human Values Educators.

Apart from dealing with teens and human values, the Youth also conduct other service activities like the 'Sai Orchard Project' where in 2003 a technique of organic gardening was practiced which had as its goal the development in Sai youth of family unity, the value of work, self sufficiency, ceiling on desires and health. This experience was held for a whole year in the Sai Centre in Montevideo, and some of the youth members even succeeded in implementing it in their homes.

Sai Meetings for a Peaceful Uruguay

While all these activities are going on at the level of the Sai Centres and Sai groups, there are other projects being undertaken at the national level. In the beginning of 2003, work began on creating the Manual de Apoyo para Grupos Sai (MAGS), (or Supporting Manual for Sai Groups) which could help newly starting Sai groups in their activities. This was the first service project at National level and was a very important one too with Sai Centres proliferating in all parts of the country. Though it took two years to complete, once done, it helped as an invaluable support material not only for Uruguay, but also for the whole of Latin America.

The first half of this decade (2000-2005) saw many public meetings being organised by the devotees in Uruguay to spread peace and harmony. In 2003 the National Coordination Committee together with the Sai Centre of Montevideo organized the 'First Conference of Religions'. It took place in the Centre of Montevideo, and many speakers from the main religions of the world gave spirited talks emphasising the commonalties of world religions. Another similar 'National Encounter on Religion' was held at the Sai Centre Montevideo in 2004. All these conferences and workshops were coordinated by devotees and non-devotees representing these religions. One important facet of all these meetings was the heartening unity that reigned among all the speakers. There was a perceptible atmosphere of tolerance and peace and one could feel His presence throughout.

After the Latin American Sai Meeting in Buenos Aires, Argentina on May 8 and 9, 2004, which was attended by many Uruguay devotees, Baba inspired these devotees to repeat in their cities the wonderful experience they had in Buenos Aires. And with the energy of the unforgettable event held in their neighbouring country, the devotees in Uruguay organized a National Sai Meeting in Montevideo, the capital city, in September 2004. This would be the last of the series of Sai Public Meetings in the cities where Sai Groups exist before the 80th birthday celebrations of Bhagavan in 2005.

The Immeasurable Glory

Meetings or no meetings, bhajans or no bhajans, the Sai movement in this small tiny Spanish speaking nation has only grown in greater pace in recent times, thanks to the mysterious ways of the divine. Though located thousands of miles away from Puttaparthi, and comprised of devotees who may not have seen Swami physically even once till now, the way divine love touches the hearts of so many simultaneously is unfathomable. It would be difficult to put in words what fills devotees' beings with ceaseless inspiration and propels them to dedicate their lives in His service. Just like the Lord who is only One, without a second, the Sai Movement in Uruguay too is unique, exceptional and divinely inspiring.

FEATURE ARTICLES

SHIRDI SAI PARTHI SAI

Part - 27

(Continued from the previous issue)

ACT VI - SCENE 4

One day, as the boys are walking to School, they decide to have a splash in the river.

BOY: Come Raju, let's all swim.

SATHYA: Please no, I don't want to.

BOY: You are always like this!

BOY 2: In that case, You look after our books while we go swimming.

Sathya watches, while others enter the water and start having fun. Meanwhile, another gang of boys come there. These boys are jealous of Sathya and do not like Him.

ONE BOY IN THE GANG: *[to Sathya]* Raju, all those boys are swimming. Come let's join them.

SATHYA: I'm not interested.

ANOTHER BOY: *[irritated]* He is always like that, different from us. Spoilsport.

BOY: *[to Sathya]* Today also we could not answer the Teacher's questions. Why did You have to answer when we could not?

ANOTHER BOY: Was it to get us scolded by the Teacher?

SATHYA: I knew the answer and I gave it. What's wrong with that? You couldn't answer and that's why the Master scolded you.

BOY: The Teacher called us 'Ignorant fools!'

ANOTHER BOY: Listen, in future if the Teacher asks a question, You should say that You don't know the answer.

THIRD BOY: If You dare to answer, see what I'll do to You!

SATHYA: What will you do?

BOY: What will I do? I'll push You in the sand and drag You!

SATHYA: Is that all?

Annoyed, the boys try to push Sathya down.

ANOTHER BOY: What should we do now?

THIRD BOY: We'll pelt Him with thorny nuts.

YET ANOTHER BOY: Come! Let's go and collect the nuts.

The rowdy gang start flinging thorny nuts at Sathya. Meanwhile, Sathya's friends who are in the water, see what is going on.

BOY: Hey! They are throwing nuts at Raju!

SATHYA: *[to the attackers]* By throwing these at My head, only your arms will ache! I don't feel any pain. The nuts are very soft like sponge.

One of the attacking boys touches a nut to see if it is soft; it is not!

BOY: Ouch! The thorns hurt!

ANOTHER BOY: Yes, it hurts!

THIRD BOY: This is strange! The nuts hurt us but Raju finds them soft like a cushion!Yes, it is true it hurts!

BOY: Hey! What do you think? Raju is not just another student like us. There is Divine Power in Him.

ONE OF THE ATTACKERS: Raju, I did something wrong. Forgive me please! I'll never again do such a thing.

SATHYA: You were not the one who did wrong; rather, it was the bad qualities of anger and jealousy in you that did it. If you want to get rid of those bad qualities, you must cultivate Love, Forbearance, and the spirit of Sacrifice. Since I'm one of you, I love every one of you. Not only that – I'll never get angry with any of you. To err may be a human tendency but real humanness consists in correcting oneself. That is the essence of the Love Principle. Try and understand it!

The boys cheer and lift Sathya on their shoulders.

(To be continued)

GITA FOR CHILDREN
Part 28
(Continued from the previous issue)

Chapter 13

46. Arjuna says, 'Krishna, please may I ask You a few more questions? Why did You create the Universe in the first place? Why did You create man? What is the purpose of human life? I hope You would be kind enough to explain.'

47. Krishna replies, 'Arjuna, at last you are beginning to think! Let Me start with the question about why I created the Universe. I have already told you that I exist even when the Universe does not. I am then in a state of sheer **oneness** and **absolute bliss**. It is not easy for ordinary mortals to understand that state but elevated souls can, especially when they go into a trance.'

48. 'Arjuna, you may not believe this, but like humans, I also enjoy sport. Devotees refer to My sport as *Leela*. Creation is a *Leela* of God! I created diversity so that I could play with Myself, appearing in numerous forms!' 49.

'You might have sometimes seen children play with dolls. They hold the doll and talk to it. And they speak as if the doll is talking back to them. They try to feed and even spank the doll if they think it is misbehaving. My *Leela* is similar!'

50. 'In one line: I separated Myself from Myself so that I could Love Myself! A mother shows love to her child. That is what your eyes see. In reality it is I, acting as the mother, who is showing love to Myself acting as the child! Feel dizzy? Don't worry! You will soon get used to this kind of stuff!'

51. Arjuna says, 'Krishna, I have a problem here. If You say that all the action one sees in the Universe is just a manifestation of You loving Yourself, then how come there is desire, attachment, etc., all of which You disapprove of?'

52. Krishna replies, 'Well, that is an interesting point you have brought up. You see Arjuna, what you call attachment, desire, etc., are, truly speaking, merely distortions of Love. I have left room for such distortions to add spice to My *Leela*!'

53. 'Let Me now explain why I created man. Consider a tigress. You know how fiercely the tigress protects its cubs. That protective instinct is born of motherly love. But the tigress cannot know anything about the original source of this love. So, in My Creation, I decided that there should be one species that is capable of higher consciousness. A monkey may love its kids but it is not evolved enough to be aware of Me, and to Love Me as the Supreme Creator. That is why I created man. In fact, I created him in My own image, blessing him with innumerable treasures, making it easy for him to recognise Me.'

54. 'Among the various species, the human form is not only the highest, but also the most sacred. *Jantunam, Narajanmam Durlabham*. The human form is very precious because it is in this form alone that an entity in Creation can truly cognise Me and become one with Me.'

55. 'This automatically brings Me to the Purpose of Life. This purpose is very simple. From God you have come, and to God you must return; that is all!'

56. 'People, may shake their heads and declare, "This is impossible! How can one make God the only object of life? What about family and relatives? What about work and relaxation? Should life become one long, dull and monotonous pilgrimage to something we do not understand?" Let Me answer this doubt.'

57. 'Arjuna, you should remember that it is I who created Society, building diversity into it. Therefore, I know very well that Society needs all kinds of services for it to exist and carry on. I am not asking anyone to walk away from life. But, and this is an important point, no matter who one is and to what strata one belongs, everyone can follow his or her vocation in life in such a manner that life's purpose is also duly fulfilled.'

58. 'How is that? Here is the answer. First, quietly chant My Name while going about your work. Let us say you are sweeping the floor. It is quite easy to sweep the floor and also chant My Name at the same time.' 59. 'By the way, there are no restrictions when it comes to Name selection. I am known by many Names and you can pick any one that pleases you. Just make sure that when you chant My Name, you do so with feeling and with Love in your Heart.'

60. 'Sometimes, chanting may not be possible while you are working. For example, pretty soon you would be busy fighting. Obviously, you would have to concentrate on the battle and cannot be chanting My Name continuously. But no problem. Just think of Me for a moment before you start. Say a small prayer like, "Lord, I am going to be busy for a while. But it is Your work I shall be busy with. Please bless it and accept that as a humble offering from me to You." After that short prayer, you can go about your business.'

61. 'When the task is completed, you can once again say a small prayer offering thanks and expressing gratitude. So, a little prayer before, work in between and a short prayer on completion – a spiritual sandwich if you like! That will do the trick, converting work into worship!'

62. 'Arjuna, the essential point is this. I have given man a body and a mind to discover Me and to come back to me. That is why I confer the human form on a select few. That opportunity ought to be properly used and not wasted.'

63. Arjuna asks, 'Lord, You say few but there are so many people on this earth! There is something here that I am missing.'

64. Krishna replies, 'If you look at the human population alone, it might seem large. But remember, there are 8.4 million living species! Compare the human population with the total population of all the other species put together, including the innumerable tiny insects. You will then realise that very few indeed are at the top of the evolution ladder, just one step away from God. Surely you would concede that is indeed a rare opportunity.'

65. 'So the big question before man is whether man should waste this wonderful opportunity, living like an animal or a demon. Instead, why not follow My simple three-point formula, which is:

1) Always think of me

2) Always think you are doing my work, whatever it be

3) Dedicate all your actions to me

Stick to this magic formula and you would be home in no time at all.'

66. Arjuna responds, 'Krishna, I have a little problem with Your observation that we should think we are working for You. Let us say there is a farmer who has employed a servant. The farmer pays the wages and therefore the servant is working for the farmer and not You. How can the servant think he is working for You? This point is not clear to me.'

67. Krishna laughs and says, 'Arjuna, if you understand what the Cosmic Drama is all about, you would not be asking this question. True, the servant is working for the farmer but that is so only in a worldly sense. In reality, who is that farmer but Me in disguise? That is the feeling of Oneness that you ought to have.'

68. Arjuna replies, 'You are in effect saying I must see God in all, aren't You? But I still have a problem. Let us say this farmer is stingy and cruel. How can I think he is You? You are Purity, Compassion and Love whereas that farmer is mean, dishonest and wicked. See my difficulty?'

69. Krishna replies, 'Arjuna, if you look merely at the surface, you would only see a mean and wicked person as you describe him. But go a bit deeper and what do you find then? You will discover that the so-called wicked farmer is indeed God in disguise giving you a test! Test is taste for God, you know!'

70. Arjuna is unconvinced. He shrugs and says, 'Krishna this is just too much! You are supposed to be God. You know everything. Then why must You test a person and make him suffer in the process? Just why do You have to do that?'

71. Krishna says in reply, 'You have got it all wrong. When did I tell you that I test a person in order to find out what exactly he is like? I know for sure everything about every person of the past, the present and also the future. When I test you, it is merely for helping you to know where exactly you are on the spiritual ladder.'

72. 'A smart devotee would say, "This is a test that God has given me. And I have done just the opposite of what He expects from me, which means I have

flunked! Let this be a lesson. Next time, let me get my act together properly and not fail like now.”

73. ‘If people introspect like this all the time, there would be rapid progress. And when there is progress, tests would also become less frequent.’

74. Arjuna is not ready to give up and raises a new question. He says, ‘Something is still missing. I can think of many noble souls who in spite of being very pure face a lot of suffering. How do You explain that?’

75. Krishna replies, ‘Oh, you have noticed that, have you? Well, the answer to that so-called paradox is the following: It is true that those noble people you are referring to do not require any quality check. Yet I put them through the grind as a part of My Master Plan!’

76. A shocked Arjuna asks, ‘You give them suffering as a part of Your Master Plan? What on earth for?’

77. Krishna replies, ‘Arjuna, you must remember that everything that God does has a purpose. In this world, there are any number of bad guys who keep on setting the wrong example. Don’t you think the world also needs at least a few good role models for *Kshama* or forbearance? Once again, God does everything with a purpose. If a blade of grass moves, that too is a part of My Master Plan. You must have that deep faith.’

(To be continued)

WINDOW TO SAI SEVA

MANSION OF LOVE -

THE REVOLUTIONARY SRI SATHYA SAI HEART HOSPITAL AT RAJKOT

Jyoti – The ‘Light’ of Ramesh and Lila

Jyoti, just as her name suggests, is the light of the Kannadiga couple, Ramesh and Lila Gowda. Though living in Ahmedabad, thousands of miles away from his home-state of Karnataka, Ramesh had no qualms, as this is the air he had breathed right from his birth. Right from the time his father moved into this city many decades ago for better opportunities, it has become the family's de facto home. And it is here that Ramesh grew up, got married to Lila and was blessed with Jyoti, their beautiful daughter. A little later, came Vasudev, the couple's only son. But the family's connection with Karnataka remained; Jyoti spent many years of her childhood in Hassan, a town in South Karnataka, where her maternal grandparents lived.

It was during this time Ramesh got an inkling that their 'light' was not shining as brightly as it should. Jyoti, in spite of all the efforts of her grandparents, was always skinny; nothing could increase her body weight. The concerned Ramesh, brought her daughter to Ahmedabad; this city, he thought, being the largest in the state, will surely find a remedy for Jyoti. And it did. After three trips and many tests at the Sharadaben Hospital (a community hospital for treatment and diagnosis), she now had a definite diagnosis. She was declared to be having a Congenital Heart Defect, in simple terms, a hole in the heart. The only solution was surgery.

Hope for Jyoti Begins to Fade

It was as if light had gone out of their lives. The operation would cost Rs. 75000 and Ramesh did not even have Rs. 1000 in his pocket then. For one who worked as a pin boy in a mill, it was unthinkable, dreadful. Moreover, the mill was no more there. It had shut down in 1996 and since then it has been a continuous struggle for Ramesh to make ends meet. With odd jobs fetching very little and at disconcerting irregularity, Ramesh had already borrowed generous amounts from friends and relatives to maintain their hand-to-mouth existence. The new adversity was like being cursed even while being in hell. But, Ramesh and Lila loved their daughter too much to just succumb to the terrible twist of fate. They would knock at every door and pray at every shrine, they decided. Through the municipal school where Jyoti was studying, they applied for relief under various schemes to the Government of India. More than a year passed since they sent all the relevant documents, there was no hint of any help whatsoever.

Little did they know then that their daughter would one day be brimming with life and fill their lives with rediscovered joy and inexplicable happiness, the panacea materializing not in their 'city of hope', Ahmedabad, but from a serene milieu located at more than hundred miles to the east of this five

million plus city. When Ramesh read a news article about a Heart Camp being organized by Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation of Ahmedabad in August 2005, he saw a ray of hope; not because he was a devotee of Sai Baba, it was the incredible fact about the news that 'all heart surgeries would be done free of cost at the Sri Sathya Sai Heart Hospital at Rajkot.' He found it difficult to believe; nevertheless, he decided to give it a try and had Jyothi registered at the camp. They received a pre-screening appointment on September 4, 2005.

After doing a series of tests, the doctors confirmed that Jyothi had a heart defect. The Gowdas were now given a date in the next month to arrive at the Heart Hospital for a final preoperative check-up. It all seemed so soothing and life-giving for Ramesh and he looked forward to the appointment date, but all this changed, when a relative dropped by for a few hours at his home, a couple of days after this event. "Ramesh, be prepared," he warned. "All this free surgery service is only show; they are going to demand you money during the operation." This was the last thing Ramesh wanted to hear; his fears now were only confirmed. "Yes, how could it be possible? Why would anybody operate free of charge?" he seemed to say himself. "It is too good to be true. I do not know if I should risk the life of my dear daughter."

Ramesh just could not come to terms that there could be an absolutely free hospital. Why Ramesh alone? Even the then Chief Minister of Gujarat, Sri Keshubhai Patel, at the time of the inauguration of the Sri Sathya Sai Heart Hospital, had said, "It is unbelievable. In my forty years of public life, I have not seen anything like this. I wonder how it is possible. Now that the building is ready and everything seems to be in its place, I am forced to believe." We will return to Jyothi's story later, but for now let us turn to the creation of the Sri Sathya Sai Heart Hospital at Rajkot. The saga of the Hospital is, indeed, one implausible story comprised of one staggering tale followed by another, be it the initiation of the idea, the execution of the plan or the day-to-day running of the hospital.

Swami's Hospitals Inspires Imitation

It all started in the early nineties when a group of Sai devotees from Rajkot, inspired by the news of the Super Specialty Hospital being set up in Puttaparthi, wanted to do something similar, even if the scale was much smaller. They came to Puttaparthi, had blissful darshan of their lord and were even blessed with an interview.

They wanted to start a diagnostic centre and had come fully prepared, complete with the blueprints of their plan. Swami spoke to them, instructed and inspired them lovingly to go ahead with their selfless work. Their joy was tempered with sadness; happy for the blessings received, but sad because one of their wishes was still not fulfilled – Swami did not bless their draft proposal to construct a health centre for reasons which nobody could guess then. But then they did not let this deter their enthusiasm.

Once they returned, they set up a make-shift diagnostic health center immediately which pre-screened patients and referred the patients for further medical care. Recalling those days, Mr. Kanubhai Patel, who has been associated with the hospital right from its inception, says, "We wanted a bigger space where we could handle patients in a better way. We approached the management of Khira Hostel which used to be a hostel for students. Their management was extremely skeptical to give the hostel on rental basis, more so, after they learnt that we were to offer our services completely free of cost. They thought it was fanciful and even if it happened, it would be short-lived". Well, the hostel management's apprehensions were understandable in this age when everything is measured only in terms of money. So it was a difficult proposition for the devotees to convince the hostel officials and the idea fructified, says Mr. Kanubhai, "Only when we gave them a local guarantor. And then within no time we commenced our center's services. There was a deluge of patients as there was no hospital in the vicinity of that area. Initially, we had no machinery and were completely dependent on outside support. But we never lost hope. Swami's golden assertion: 'If anyone tries to do good to others with a selfless motive, take this assurance from Me, all his needs will be taken care of,' always rang in our ears and we had rock-like faith." And what happened later might be an extraordinary coincidence for a casual observer, but they knew it was the divine working as ever in His mysterious ways.

"One day in the morning when the hostel was being cleaned," Mr. Kanubhai recalls, "a gentleman from Singapore came in and had a look at the center. He was flabbergasted to know that all the medical services in here were offered absolutely free, with good intentions and no expectations. He was surprised, and at the same time sad because it did not have adequate equipment. He immediately offered to donate machinery worth 1.2 million, and in no time the centre saw itself in a completely new visage. The doctors could now treat more people with less trouble." Miracles in every sphere of work of this diagnostic centre was nothing unusual, it was there everyday for people to see. Just consider Kalpanaben.

The Case of Kalpanaben

Kalpanaben was diagnosed to be suffering from twin problems; she needed valve replacement as well as valve surgery. Rajkot, at that time (early nineties), had little assistance for such problems. Hailing from a very poor background and living with her two kids, aged two and four, there was no way she could afford the surgery. But finance was not really an issue because a London-based Sai devotee had promised to cover whatever the expense. The main concern was the complexity of the case. She needed the surgery urgently but no surgeon was prepared to take the chance. Nothing could save her except prayer, it seemed.

Dr. Rajesh Teli, one of the doctors at the diagnostic centre, referred her to the leading surgeon in Ahmedabad. Even he gave up, seeing the risky situations involved. But, God had not given up on her. During this time, Dr. T. Lebroys, a British Surgeon, was in Ahmedabad for a day to address a conference on the

latest surgical practices offered abroad. The Ahmedabad based prominent surgeon referred the case to Dr. Lebroy. After studying the case carefully, Dr. Lebroy said, "I will do the operation, provided it can be done tomorrow." And so, immediately arrangements were made. On call, the devotee from London provided the financial assistance of Rs. 75,000 within 24 hours, which took care of the hospitalization expenses, valve costs, etc. Moved by the selfless motive of Sai volunteers who were helping the hapless lady out, Dr. Lebroy did not charge a rupee for the operation. The surgery, by the Almighty's grace, was a success. With her valves replaced and repaired, Kalpanaben now was ecstatic. She could now lead a normal life. It is amazing how so many events connected themselves so beautifully to rewrite Kalpana's destiny, who did not know anybody even within the range of 40 kms of the city of Rajkot, where she lived. Somebody has rightly said, "Coincidences are occasions when God chooses to be anonymous."

The Divine Exceeds Expectations

Everyday experiences of such 'divine designs' only raised the devotees' zeal to its zenith. They wanted to do more but what they had was still just that - a small diagnostic centre. They wanted a bigger and better equipped health centre for diagnosis. They waited for the opportunity to present their desire before Bhagavan. And the breakthrough did come shortly, in a manner and scale they had never anticipated.

It all happened in 1994 when Mr. Kanubhai Patel on a visit to Puttaparthi, offered to Bhagavan three crores in reverence and gratitude for the three sons that God had blessed him with. The merciful Bhagavan, who only knows to give, told Him He does not need his money but suggested that the amount could be spent to build a hospital for the poor and the neglected in Gujarat itself.

This was the memorable moment... the beginning of the amazing Sri Sathya Sai Heart Hospital of Rajkot, which has now become a 'fairy tale of a health centre' for the poor. Immediately after the divine expressed this wish, a contingent of devotees started working 24/7 and within days they were in Puttaparthi with blueprints of the proposed building. When they arrived, it was as if Swami was waiting for them, for He immediately asked a senior staff of the Puttaparthi Hospital to give them a comprehensive tour of the hospital.

Once they were done, He called them in for an interview and at length explained all about the human heart, its functions and features, types of cardiac surgeries and their procedures, what really constitutes treatment, what should be the approach towards healing and so on. For nearly half an hour, Swami was the expert surgeon-cum-hospital administrator, spelling out nuances of ethical and moral medical care and curing. "I consider myself and others who were there extremely fortunate as we received directions direct from divinity Himself," says Dr. Rajesh Teli who was present in that interview. It was a blissful session, no doubt, but towards the end of it the devotees started getting nervous. For some reason, in spite of all the guidance that Swami was giving, He did not bless the blueprints they had brought. The

plans they had drawn were for a large diagnostic centre but Baba's goal for them was even grander. Beckoning Kanubhai Patel near who was sitting at the back of the room, Swami asked, "Patel, *tune suna...* Hospital *banaiga*?" [Patel, did you hear...will you make the hospital?] Kanubhai, a little taken aback, responded, "Karega, Swami, Baroda Mein" [Yes, Swami we will do in Baroda, (the city in Gujarat where Kanubhai lived)].

Swami wanted a full-fledged hospital, not just a big diagnostic centre. It was clear now. And Kanubhai had now suggested the location too: the city of Baroda. But Swami had more surprises in store for them that day. He asked, "Saurashtra accha nahi hai? Kya Rajkot hamara nahi hai?" [Is the region Saurashtra not good enough? Is Rajkot (a city in the Saurashtra region of Gujarat) not ours?]

Incidentally, the region of Saurashtra is among the least developed regions in the state of Gujarat. With poor infrastructure and sparse availability of right manpower and other resources, it would be a challenge to run a hospital in this region. A little concerned Kanubhai asked, "Swami, how will we manage in Rajkot?" And then came the mighty divine assurance: "Swami will manage."

And that is how it exactly happened. He, in His incredible way, arranged everything. When the devotees asked Swami, "How would we get land for hospital in our meager budget?" He replied, "*Woh patel ko jaake poocho*" [Go and ask Patel for that (Patel here referring to Mr. Keshubhai Patel who was then Chief Minister of Gujarat)]. And sure enough, when the Chief Minister heard their proposal, he called the collector and asked him to expedite the organization's request for land. After going through the few sites shown, the devotees zeroed down to a one lakh acre plot near Virani Science College in Rajkot City, around four kms from the Railway Station, as the spot for the future hospital.

But from where is the money going to come from to buy the land? [Kanubhai's generous donation was earmarked completely for construction] Government charges about 50% of the land cost if it were to be used for charitable purposes. But taking cognizance of the 'completely free treatment plan' of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organization, the government waived another 25%. Yet, the remaining 25% was no small amount. The trustees of the proposed hospital deliberated on various avenues for good amount of time in Mumbai and then returned to their respective cities. They knew they had only one channel open now: beseeching their Lord through prayer.

Babubhai's Soul Donation

One of the trustees, Mansukhbhai Rindani, who was also a leading Chartered Accountant of Rajkot, was returning to his city in an Indian Airlines flight after this meeting, concerned all the time about the land. To his pleasant surprise, when he turned his head he found seated next to him an old acquaintance, Mr. Babubhai, who was now settled in South Africa. Mansukhbhai learnt that this friend had recently lost his wife and was despondent. Babubhai's mission now was to look out for a noble cause and donate some money in the

memory of his late wife which would probably bring some solace to his soul. And as you have already guessed, Babubhai was the right man the yet-to-be-born hospital needed. So inspired he was about the cause that, once he returned to South Africa he donated not only what he had originally intended but 5½ times more!

Just as promised, Swami was indeed 'managing' the whole endeavour. Whenever teams from the hospital came to His physical presence during its construction phase, be it trustees, architects, contractors, doctors, administrators or volunteers, Swami always called them in and gave them much-needed guidance and enlivened their enthusiasm. And on August 4, 2000, the inauguration day of the hospital, He sent Dr. Safaya, the director of His Super Specialty Hospital at Puttaparthi, as well as Sri Indulal Shah, the then International Chairman of Sai Organisations, to do the honours. On this D-Day were also present the Chief Minister of Gujarat, Sri Keshubhai Patel, and along with him the whole cabinet.

After the unique edifice started functioning, Swami's involvement never diminished, in fact, it only increased. He constantly kept guiding the doctors and administrators at every available opportunity. "The patient should always be seen as Narayana-Swarupa (a likeness of God) and under no circumstance shall the treatment be compromised" – This was His constant message. Another important aspect that He always stressed was: "There should be no bill book." It is these two principles which like unequivocal guideposts have shaped the philosophy of the Sri Sathya Sai Heart Hospital at Rajkot. The mission of the hallowed health centre says, "Our philosophy is to provide free access to exemplary standards of heart care supported by state of the art equipments to patients primarily from the weaker sections of the society (irrespective of caste, creed, race and religion), who would, otherwise, be deprived of such expensive heart care owing to lack of financial resources."

It is Swami who gave this noble vision and it is again He who was making it materialize. How reputed Cardiac surgeons from UK, who are not even devotees of Swami, fly down every year to serve at this Hospital voluntarily for weeks is amazing. Dr. Chandrasekhar, a surgeon from St. George's Hospital, UK says, "The pace at which the patients recover here is something extraordinary. What would take 2-3 days else where, heals in 12 hours here! It is a joy and a privilege to work here." From a hospital, it has transformed itself into a 'Temple of love and Healing'. Thanks to the hospital, today Rabiya and her family are more convinced than ever that Allah is looking after them.

Hope for Rabiya in Rajkot

When Rabiya, the daughter of a tea stall owner married to a daily wager, developed heart complications, the family was devastated. Her husband, Rashid could not even go for his daily earnings as he had to help Rabiya at home. Their economic condition deteriorated to dismal levels and Rabiya now returned to her father's home. For Mohammed, the father of six children including Rabiya, it was as if somebody had placed a 100 kilo stone in his

heart. Apart from financial distress, the whole situation had triggered unpleasant family repercussions. He wanted to do something at the earliest and on the advise of a physician, he approached the Civil Hospital, Ahmedabad. After a number of tests, the doctors gave their verdict: Rabiya had a hole in her heart.

The family was stunned. Mohammed visited the hospital again, now looking for a possible cure. "Operation is mandatory," the doctors said. "It would cost at least a lakh." The family now went into unknown depths of depression. With such a terrible trauma on his head, Mohammad now moved from pillar to post, to find a possible way out. He found out the Government of Gujarat through the Chief Ministers Relief Fund provided a 33% subsidy for poor people. But the hospital would not take up the case unless he deposited the balance Rs. 60000. Mohamed talked to his friends and relatives, but in vain. As if this was not cruel enough, now there were fresh family problems with Rabiya and her in-laws. Mohammed was deeply distraught and the family sunk further into despair. How much worse can it get? Allah was their only refuge now. Rabiya's mother prayed with tears coursing down her cheeks.

Mohamed, the family's patriarch and only hope, decided to go to the hospital one more time. He met the senior cardiologist and explained to him this pitiable predicament. He begged if he could be given more time to make the payments. The cardiologist did not give him more time, in fact, he removed all the burden from Mohammed's head. He told him, "Go to the Sri Sathya Sai Heart Hospital in Rajkot. All operations there are conducted totally free of cost and there is no discrimination of any kind." Mohamed for a moment felt as light as a feather, but slowly doubts started unsettling him. "How is it that the operations are done totally free? There must be a catch." His mind was never at rest.

On the next Thursday Mohamed and his wife took Rabiya to Rajkot, a distance of 216 kms from their home-city, Ahmedabad. Rabiya again went through a multitude of tests and the hole in the heart was confirmed. She was advised medication to increase her weight and the hospital informed them that they would soon receive an intimation giving them the date of operation. Mohammed and family returned home, relieved and happy. But friends and relatives took away his peace. One of them said, "There should be some kind of 'underhand dealing' to get the operation done". "Or, maybe they might force you to change your religion," said another. For another 4-5 days, the family's distress and Mohammed's mental trauma continued, that is, until they received a postcard from the hospital. "Our operation is scheduled on February 6, 2006," the letter said. Rabiya checked into the hospital two days in advance for preoperative examinations and three days after the surgery she was on her way home, serene and smiling. The family's ordeal was finally over. Dr. Mansuri, one of the physicians who had seen Rabiya earlier, was moved to tears seeing the new Rabiya. He said, "In today's time when all - families, community, relationships - abandon each other in time of need, Sai Baba has embraced us". The family was jubilant. "Allah has answered our prayers," is all they say with smiles brimming on their cheeks.

The Hospital - A Testimony to Selfless Love

Where selfless love is, there God is. The hospital today stands as a testimony to the whole world what pure love, when expressed in service, can do. Over the years, many distinguished personalities, national and international, have stepped into the portals of this 'mansion of love'; some came as curious visitors, some as willing-to-learn social workers and some as inquisitive investigators. All of them witnessed the unbelievable and left humbled paying homage to this 'savior of the poor'. When the former Chief Minister visited the place a couple of years ago, he left with the hospital a cheque with a generous amount from his relief fund. Very recently, the Rajkot Municipal corporation, as a mark of gratitude, contributed a large sum to the hospital's coffers.

Till 2006, more than six hundred and forty such Rabiya and Rashid have found hope, health and happiness, and by 2008, the hospital targets it will rise to surely one thousand. And these are patients not only from in and around Rajkot or from the city of Ahmedabad, they come from all over the state of Gujarat. At times, you will even find patients from the far-north of India. Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma, the world renowned Santoor maestro, on his visit to the hospital, was surprised to find a patient from his home-state of Jammu and Kashmir. Selfless love has become so scarce in the present times, any amount of distance or ordeal is welcome once you are convinced it is assured.

Healing the Poor through Service

But the hospital's Sai volunteers do not wait for patients to find the hospital (in some cases, it might be too late); instead in their zeal to reach out, they go into the villages, into habitations that are obscure and poor. They organize Heart-Camps, identify people who need cardiac help, listen to their complaints, register them, answer their queries and then clearly direct them to the hospital. These camps are moving for all the volunteers. "Sometimes, the economic condition of the patients is so pitiable that we even have to give them money for their auto charge or bus ticket to enable them to make that one and only visit to the hospital for the operation," says Sri Lalit Advani, a spirited Sai volunteer. The whole exercise is as fulfilling as it can be, as they reach out to people whose existence society does not even acknowledge, let alone be concerned about their welfare.

Love Heals Hema Motwani

In one such medical camp in 2005 conducted in the outskirts of Ahmedabad city, the volunteers encountered Hema Motwani. Her husband, Daulatram's small shop had to cater to the needs of their family, which apart from their own two children, also had Daulatram's parents. Hema was a diligent woman taking care of all the house-hold chores as well as needs of her in-laws. But suddenly, due to some financial constraints when Daulatram sold his shop, the stress for her was too much to bear and she suffered from chest pains. Daulatram first took her to a hospital named Shantiprakash where after

undergoing tests, she was declared to be a heart patient. Surgery was unavoidable. They approached the U. N. Mehta Institute of Cardiac Research and Hospital which gave them an estimate of Rs. 1.25 lakhs, out of which 33% would be subsidized by the government. Daulatram tried accumulating the remaining Rs. 83,750 but all efforts proved futile. The diagnostic tests itself had drained his resources to a great extent.

Just like Rabiya's family, this family too was in a state of utter helplessness. But here fortunately there were no misguiding friends or relatives. In fact, it was a good friend, a sevadal of the Sathya Sai organization, who informed them about the Heart-Camp to be conducted in their area very shortly. Daulatram saw a ray of hope as he recollected having donated blood many a times for the blood donation camps conducted by the organization. Now, he knew there was a solution. Soon, Hema was registered, tests conducted and duly operated. All her stress evaporated, she was now smiling, shining and her active self. When H2H asked her father-in-law what he thinks he will do for his lord, without a second thought in an asserting voice he said, "Jaan hazir hain!" (I am ready to give my life!) That is how much the Heart-Camps have done to connect people to the hospital and heal their desperate lives.

Ramesh and Jyothi Receive a Second Chance

If you recall, even Ramesh Gowda, (the story with which we started this article) learnt about the hospital only after he read about a Heart-Camp in a local newspaper. He even got registered and did receive his scheduled date for Jyothi's operation. But the 'free hospital' doubts were dancing so dangerously on his head that he let go of that opportunity. [This is something he could never forgive himself in the days to come.]

In the meantime, Jyothi's condition only worsened, it was as if the 'light of his life' was getting enveloped with increasing darkness every passing day. In a state of desperation, Ramesh contacted some of the people who were present with him at the first Heart Camp. He wanted to know: Were their surgeries successful? Was it really free? What did the hospital demand? He was shocked to hear the responses. All were operated successfully barely fifteen days after the camp and they were happy, with no complaints whatsoever. He realized that all his fears were completely unfounded. Immediately a wave of guilt gnawed his entire being. He felt, "It is I who is responsible for my daughter's pathetic situation." He could barely speak to his wife, Lila. His transformation was immediate and repentance was paramount on his mind. In no time, he managed to get a photo of Baba and decided to pray till He did something to improve Jyoti's health.

Something interesting happened now. Within a few days, the unemployed Ramesh got a small job. They had now a means of living. In another two months, there was a bonus: additional part-time work supplementing his income. The family was getting fed now, but Jyoti's heart was still left to its creator's grace. As they prayed and cursed themselves of the missed opportunity, a wave of joy swept out all the melancholy when Ramesh noticed the date of another Heart Camp to be held in his area. His only worry now

was whether he will be given another chance. The doors of pure love are always open. In fact, they say, God is waiting like the early morning warm rays of the Sun to enter our beings if only we make at least a tiny hole in the wooden door of our heart.

Jyoti's New Life Shines

So without any objections, Jyothi was registered and even given the date of operation then and there. The Gowdas reached Rajkot from Ahmedabad, a day earlier to the operation. The next day Jyothi was operated upon and the day after she was discharged. The ailing heart had found its solace and Jyothi, a new life.

The Gowdas, today, are a changed family. When H2H visited the Gowdas on the eve of Bhagavan's Swami's 81st birthday, they were in a great mood, celebrating the occasion distributing sweets to the neighbors. They have never seen Swami physically; they just know His ashram is in Andhra Pradesh. Nevertheless, for them, now Sai Baba is all. When asked about visiting Puttaparthi, the enthused and energetic Jyothi says, "*Mai Zaroor Jaongi*" (I will surely go) with a smile and spirit of somebody beyond her years.

The Sri Sathya Sai Heart Hospital Stands as a Beacon of Love

If this not a miracle, then what is! The Sri Sathya Sai Heart Hospital has not only healed the physical hearts of hundreds but also allowed them access to that 'colossus store of positive energy and inspiration' by awakening and enlivening each one's spiritual hearts. While these are the individual effects on each patient and their near and dear ones, on the global level, it has magnificently demonstrated what many medical administrators and other health professionals think is far-fetched or utopian.

The general conclusion when people contemplate on Swami's Super Specialty Hospitals, both in Bangalore and Puttaparthi, is that, "These hospitals are running completely free because of Swami's physical involvement and to replicate these is simply unthinkable in current times." Sometime ago, when the editor of SWISSMED (Swiss Review for Medicine and Medical Technology), Mr. Felix Wust, asked Dr. Safaya, the Director of Swami's Hospital at Puttaparthi, the same question - if such 'free hospitals' can be replicated in the West - he said, "Why not? I do not think Westerners are devoid of sympathy for people. I do not think the West is lacking in the type of people who think serving man is serving God." There lies the key. Before the developed world has even contemplated on such an idea, it is there for the whole world to see in one of the poorest regions of developing India! With pure love anything is possible. There is nothing in the world that selfless love cannot achieve and if anybody wants more proof, the resplendent Sri Sathya Sai Heart Hospital at Rajkot stands as a beacon, embracing one and all into its bosom of love.

- Heart2Heart Team

PRASHANTI DIARY

Cultural Programme from devotees from Adilabad, Godavari District February 10, 2007

The beauty radiated by the ochre robed Lord was soothing thousands of souls in the huge hall. Sai Kulwant Hall was filled with bustle and life. Thousands from Adilabad, a remote district of Andhra Pradesh, had come to have a glimpse of their dear Lord. Booking a special twenty two compartment train and thirty three additional buses, 3,200 devotees arrived to savor the beauty of their beloved Master. We now bring you the whole event from the eyes of a current student pursuing his Masters degree in the Institute who hails from this district of Adilabad:

“As I saw them, thoughts swelled from the depths of memories. Thoughts that wondered, thoughts that questioned, thoughts that admired, thoughts that bestowed insights...thoughts and more thoughts.

Adilabad, my beloved district - the sparkling waters of Godavari, the roar of Kuntala falls, the peace and solemnity of Basara Sarawathi, the mechanized hum of Singareni coal mines, the chemical odor of Khagaznagar paper mills, the gloom of communist uprisings..... once appeared too far to be touched by Sai. But Sai spread forth in this district, slowly and steadily, pockets of bhajana mandalis chanted His name here and there, vibhuthi appeared on photos, amrit emerged out of idols....people flocked to watch these sights. Some folded their palms in awe and wonder while many dismissed them as ‘only farce’. Yet all discussed about this phenomenon called Sai. Some called Sai a mystique monk; for some Sai was a chosen instrument of a holy God; some thoughtfully remarked “an active social worker”; while many said, “He must be one of those tricksters....and he will be exposed shortly.” But when the rational minds exposed His TRUE nature they thronged to Him in thousands.

Rajanarsu is a respected employee of Singareni coal mines of Bellampalli. His entire family plunged itself into various service activities conducted by the local Satya Sai samithi. In his house amrit would miraculously flow from Swami’s photographs, vibhuthi would appear overnight in the shape of foot prints leading to the altar. Hundreds would stream in day and night to witness these unusual happenings. This flurry challenged the rational belief of the associates of the district atheist committee. The committee nominated a president and provided him able associates to firmly disprove these bizarre occurrences. The president and the accomplices with trademark unruly behavior entered Rajanarsu’s house and with despicable language disrupted the entire proceedings.

In celebration of this ‘victory’, the president called a party and invited all the associates to his house. With all the gaiety and pomp the arrangements were made and in mockery he even had kept a photograph of Swami in a corner. The associates lauded this act as an ‘innovative insult’. They raised their drinks and praised their ‘reason’. It was then that Sai struck the death knell.

The president noticed a few droplets on the photo but dismissed them to be beverage sprinkled by one amongst them. But slowly the droplets turned into a trickle. It was duly wiped away. Yet again the mysterious liquid flowed from the photo. It was wiped neat and clean, but, alas, the liquid oozes again. The photo was washed with hot water....Gosh! The liquid flows again!! Two days later the locality was agog with another surprise. The president visited the Bellampalli Sai temple and made a special request to hold a bhajan in his house. He said, "I would like to sanctify my house with the name of Sai." He was one among those multitudes from Adilabad seated in the Sai Kulwant hall. As he saw Swami during Darshan, his eyes were moist and he quipped, "God exists, and today I have seen him".

Kunchavelli is a small village with 800 households located in a corner of Adilabad. But that day there was something unusual in the village. Villagers gathered around a house and were watching a sight in a deafening silence. All that was heard were loud voices of the family members singing bhajans. The sole bread winner of the family died that morning. He was in his late thirties. He died in the hospital of a nearby town called Bellampalli. After the doctors gave the final verdict and announced him dead, the body was brought back home. One long hour of journey almost stiffened the body. When the members of the family saw their sole support dead, they did not despair nor collapse in endless sorrow. They brought a picture of Swami and placed it near the body. Then they sat around and started bhajans.

All the villagers flocked to see this strange sight. Thirty minutes passed by and suddenly the body shook. The dead man shouted 'Sairam' and sat up as if he had a bad dream. The whole village was muted in to a stunning silence, later they all raised their arms in prayer towards the heaven and cried, "The Lord of Elijah, Jesus of the Bible, God of Heavens has come again as Sai." The entire village was there in multitudes seeing their God whose mere name brought back dead to life.

Each face had a different story to tell, each group had a unique experience to narrate. Yet all of them shared a common feeling – 'Sai is our God and we Love Him.'

As they sat for Darshan on February 10, 2007, in the morning, Sai came out and enquired lovingly from their young and dynamic district president, P.Venkat Rao, as to how many people had come. He blessed the brochure, permitted them to hold the programme and made a special reference regarding the drama to be staged. In the evening Swami distributed special prasadam to His devotees from Adilabad. Late in the evening Prof. Gangadhar Shastry of Sri Satya Sai University stunned them into silence with an inspiring and thought-provoking speech.

Next day, the compassionate Lord showered His boundless love. He allowed them to enthrall Him with melodious songs. In return He created three chains and blessed those gifted singers. Swami then addressed the gathering for an hour. He said,

“Be truthful in life. Adhere to the human values. Let them guide all your actions. Satya gives raise to Dharma, which brings Shanthi. Be humane in all your actions and be worthy of the human life. Each of you is divine, realize this truth and lead your life in accordance to this.”

He then lighted a lamp, the ‘Chaitanya Jyothi’ which the devotees wished to carry back to their district and light every home with the name of Sai. Then He beckoned four kids and was enraptured with their vedic chanting.

In the afternoon, the devotees displayed the diverse cultural heritage of Adilabad in different traditional dances: Batakamma, Gussadi, Dhimsa, Chekka bhajana and many other items displayed in His presence. The District President said, ‘They will flow ceaselessly till eternity. These are our offerings to our beloved God. Our lives too are a part of this flow Lord they shall flow to touch the hem of Your robe and be sanctified forever.’

After a spectacular cultural display the district youth staged a drama entitled ‘Sai Hain Jeevan’. The drama was about the role played by the youth in social service. Through powerful dialogues and melodious poems, the presentation succinctly pointed out the miraculous presence of Sai in all their activities. Very aptly it ended on the note: ‘Sai is our everything. With Him we are heroes and without him we are mere zeroes.’ Their talent was admirable and their feelings commendable. The Lord was, beyond doubt, moved. His tears said it all. He blessed them with a group photograph and granted individual padanamaskar to all the actors including the organizers. He told them,

‘Your character is very good. I will come to your place in a special train. I will build schools and colleges for you. Your children will be educated there. You will take care of them in future.’

This boundless shower of Love was a reflection of all those youth activists had done. They would rise early in the morning and would circumambulate the Sai temple in Bellampalli 108 times. This went on for nearly two months uninterrupted. I saw their bleeding heels, their swollen feet and when enquired, they all said, ‘We love our Swami and we want to stage a drama in His presence.’

These fiery youth of Adilabad mobilized hundreds to undertake seva activities. With an able support of the district elders, they served 405 villages of the district. On the particular day of grama seva, each village would rise early in the morning with the name ‘Sai’ being echoed by the youth. Sai sevaks would then conduct high quality veterinary and medical camps. These camps are attended by the reputed medical wizards of Andhra Pradesh. They would then hold an awareness camp for all the children and their parents. Later they would undertake strenuous physical labour cleaning the drains, building water tanks and schools, laying roads and much more. They built three elementary schools and connected eight highly inaccessible hilly areas to the main stream of economic life. Evenings would witness a grand procession of Sai in a palanquin. Almost each of the households, irrespective of their religion would receive Him with Aarthi and offer their heartfelt prayers. In the night the

youth would stage a drama entitled 'Maarpu Raavaali - We should Change' and thus subtly but powerfully conveying the message 'Be good, Do good and See good. This is the way to God.'

Hundreds of these innocent villagers too were seated in the multitudes that thronged to Him. Many of them, referring to these youth said, 'He came to us through you and called us to Him. Today we came to Him.'

Sai filled their hearts and minds with His Darshan on February 12 and all of them left for their homes in the evening. As they walked out of the mandir, some were choked with emotion, some dug their faces in their palms and wept, some were lost in the thought of Sai. One amongst them remarked, 'We are carrying Prashanthi Nilayam in our hearts and Sai in our breath. None can be ever separate us from His breath and His heart.'

One day prior to their arrival, Swami called the authorities and said, **'My devotees are coming from Adilabad. Give them proper accommodation and food. Take good care of them.'** Later Swami called the district president and enquired about the status of drinking water and the number of rivers that flow in the district. He said that a direct train to the district would be provided very soon.

After the music programme, He called the music director of the group and said, **'These are My children. Teach them good music.'** He called a kid and patting his cheek said, **'Learn music well. Visualize me always in your eyes. In your next trip you will sing very nicely'** and immediately the whole group was excited for there would be another trip to Puttaparthi!"

Shivarathri Celebrations: 16th February 2007

The eve of every new moon night is considered an auspicious night for Lord Siva and is known as Sivaratri. The new moon night in the vedic month of Magha (February-March), however, is more auspicious because as legend has it, Lord Siva performs the Cosmic dance of creation, preservation and destruction, and hence, is known as Mahasivaratri. The temples perform Rudra Abhisekham (chanting sacred hymns in praise of Lord Shiva) starting in the evening and all through the night. Devotees fast all day and the night of Mahasivaratri and break the fast the next day morning. People gather together and sing praises or bhajans of Lord Siva. Some take the opportunity to chant the mantra "Om Namah Sivaya" all night. It is also common to congregate at the nearby Siva temple and pour water and milk on the Lingam. Many women worship Siva for the welfare of their husbands and the unmarried women make offerings in the hope of getting a good husband.

In His Shivarathri discourse of 1969 Baba explained the following details about the Lingam:

"The Linga is just a symbol, a sign, an illustration, of the beginningless, the endless, the limitless - for it has no limbs, no face, no feet, no front or back, no

beginning or end. Its shape is like the picture one imagines the Niraakaara (Formless) to be. In fact, linga means - leeyathe (that in which all forms and names merge) and gamyathe (that towards which all names and forms are proceeding, to attain fulfillment). It is the fittest symbol of the All-pervasive, the All-knowing, the All-powerful."

Now just think for a moment how fortunate you would be if you happen to visit the nearby Shiva temple to sing bhajans and are blessed by a vision of Lord Shiva Himself. Well, this is exactly what every devotee in Prasanthi Nilayam experienced on this blessed night of Shivarathri. Tears rolled down the eyes of many a devotee as they saw their Lord Sai Shiva amidst them blessing them with His darshan while they sang His glory. As Puttaparthi metamorphosed into the mystical mount Kailasa and the ashram donned a celebratory look, huge crowds of devotees from all parts of the globe were pouring in to actively participate in singing the glory of God all night long.

Blessed indeed are the devotees who stood for hours together in long queues to enter the Sai Kulwant Hall to witness the festival of Mahasivarathri. Their long wait was over as Bhagavan graced the Sai Kulwant hall in the morning at around 8 a.m. When the first rain lashes across the dry lands, the Earth expresses its joy by spreading the fragrance of its soil far and wide. The same was true on that beautiful morning. Parched hearts which lay hard and dry received the shower of His love as He moved amongst His devotees. The Nadaswaram and the chantings of Vedic hymns seemed further to electrify the atmosphere. As Bhagavan entered the verandah the overseas devotees and the students stood eagerly awaiting His presence to cut the specially made "Shivarathri cake" they had prepared with great care and affection for Bhagavan. After cutting the cakes, Bhagavan went to the dais for the morning proceedings.

The senior students rendered a musical programme that lasted for nearly fifty minutes. Songs that glorified Eashwara were offered at the Lotus Feet of the same Eashwara who is now in the form of our Saishwara. The music program was intertwined with commentaries that spoke of the greatness and grandeur of the Lord of Mount Kailasa. The students declared – "You are the Puppeteer and the world dances at Your tunes... You are Sambasiva, our Divine Mother and Father, we take refuge in You". Towards the end prasadam was distributed and Bhagavan returned to His residence at 9:30 a.m. after receiving the mangala arathi.

The evening session made the Sai Kulwant hall appear very small. People hailing from different lands and speaking many languages, thronged the Sai Kulwant hall to listen to the nectarine flow of wisdom in the form of the Divine discourse. Devotees were accommodated in the hall from noon itself. Bhagavan arrived in the evening at 4:15 p.m. Sri. A.V.S. Raju, a senior devotee of Bhagavan was the recipient of the Divine benediction to render his telugu compositions on Bhagavan.

This poetic rendering was followed by exhilarating, inspirational rhetoric excellence by Sri. Ajit Popat from the United Kingdom. His inspirational

speech, a fine blend of Divine teachings, poetic verses from the spiritual classics suffused with wit and wisdom, was indeed a treat to the huge gathering. In his potent forty minute speech, he said, “We are all assembled here with a purpose and the purpose is to contemplate on the journey ahead... and that journey is a journey Onward, Forward, Upward and Godward, and not Outward but Inward... and that is our duty.”

Sri Popat in his own inimitable way gave seven tenets for life that he preferred to call ‘seven ups’.

Wake up: We should wake up with the spirit of God. Let us listen to the ‘BBC’ – ‘Baba Broadcasting Corporation’ as soon as we wake up which is “Sathya Sai Speaks”.

Stand up: We should stand up to the conviction Aham Brahmasmi – I am Brahma. We are verily God.

Dress up: We have to make up our mind. Let us seek everything from God. Let us offer everything to God with no sense of doership.

Look up: When I go back home and touch the Lotus Feet in the shrine of my room at Prem Kutir (in London), I should feel and think that I am really touching Bhagavan’s Feet at Prasanthi Nilayam and look up to God with gratitude.

Reach up: We have to reach up to the poor and hungry. Recently in Chennai in a Discourse, Bhagavan said that when we see a hungry person, we should ourselves feel the pangs of hunger and rush to feed him. Bhagavan was reaching to the people by going in the roads near Sundaram so that they could also experience Bhagavan’s Love.

Lift up: Let us lift our brothers and sisters. Is it not our duty to bring people to Bhagavan so that they can also experience the warmth of Bhagavan’s love and bask in His glory?

Shut up: We are only a witness. Bhagavan wants us to become the eternal witness. In all our actions, we should have 100% involvement and 0% attachment. We should punctiliously follow His teachings. The excellent speaker ended his speech with a prayer to Swami to help humanity walk the path of truth and righteousness.

Now came the moment all hearts eagerly awaited for. Bhagavan with a lilting smile rose to deliver His benedictory address at 5:55 p.m.

Bhagavan declared, “Truth is all pervasive...It is everywhere”...and lo! He materialised a golden ring substantiating His statement... “Everything originates from Truth. Righteousness emerges from Truth. When Truth and Righteousness come together Peace emerges and this is followed by Love. It is Love that brings everyone together. From Love comes Bliss. With Love, there is no room for hatred and this makes way for Non-violence”, said Bhagavan. Exhorting the students to follow the culture of Bharat, Bhagavan declared that very soon all would recognise the culture of Bharat. Acknowledging the devotion of devotees from overseas countries, Bhagavan resounded, “All are one”. The Russian blocks, both men and women in the congregation were the recipients of a special Divine appreciation and the group cheered back with raised hands in reverence to the Divine remark.

Pointing to the array of bulbs in the Hall Bhagavan said, "Bulbs are many, but current is one." Speaking on the manifestation of Linga, Bhagavan said that He had received many letters from devotees and the doctors were also of the view that the manifestation of Linga strains His body and that His body was very important for everyone. All have prayed to Bhagavan to save His energy. They were all of the view that Bhagavan should not strain His body to give this temporary joy to the devotees and that Bhagavan should retain this energy to confer bliss on everyone.

Speaking on the acronym of the word Hindu, Bhagavan said that the five letters represent five sheaths and five human values.
H – Humility..... I – Individuality..... N – Nationality.... D - Divinity.... U – Unity

When once there is Unity, you can develop Divinity. We should uphold Nationality. So, it is the individual who safeguards Nationality.

On the free education being given to students, Bhagavan said that not a pie is taken from students with respect to their education, be it examination fees or library fees.

Bhagavan made an announcement that very soon He would go on trips round the world and that there are lots of devotees in Africa and Russia. "You are no longer Russians, you belong to Bhagavan. Russians, Japanese, Americans, Italians, all belong to Me. We have to learn many things from them. These overseas devotees go to all places that Bhagavan goes. They even came to Chennai in spite of all difficulties and expenditure."

Bhagavan left for Yajur Mandiram at 7:15 p.m. and then Prasanthi Nilayam became suffused with the joyful Akhanda Bhajan. One of the bhajans often sung in Prasanthi Nilayam is: "Sada Nirantara Hari Guna Gao" verily meaning "Sing the praises of God continuously and incessantly" and this is what happened that holy night. Devotees from all corners of the globe participated passionately, with many of them staying awake the whole night, singing the name of the Lord. Groups from various parts of India and the overseas devotees led the bhajans in turns, thus keeping the Sai Kulwant hall reverberating with divine vibrations throughout the night. Many devotees renounced hunger and sleep on this holy night and immersed themselves wholeheartedly in the Akanda Bhajan.

Shivarathri Morning, February 17, 2007:

The next morning the devotees staying awake the whole night singing bhajans were eagerly awaiting the darshan of their dearest Lord Sai. It was nearing 8:00 a.m. All eyes were glued to the pathway leading from Bhagavan's Residence...and then the moment arrived. The dazzling red clad Divine Form emerged out of Yajur Mandiram and foregoing the car, Bhagavan went through the assemblage of devotees onto the dais.

As Bhajans were still continuing, Bhagavan asked Prof. G.Venkataraman, former Vice Chancellor of the Institute to address the gathering.

Thanking Bhagavan for the rare privilege of the most exhilarating and elevating experience of Maha Shivarathri in the Divine Presence, Prof. Venkataraman made mention of the recently concluded Divine visit to Chennai. Referring to the official function organised by the Chennai Citizen's Conclave, Prof. Venkataraman said that the meeting was indeed a most extraordinary one as luminaries from the political scene were sharing the dais with Bhagavan sinking ideological differences and offering themselves at His Divine Lotus Feet. Making a special mention about the youth, Prof. Venkataraman observed that it was time for the youth to come forward with Bhagavan's Divine Message to save the world that was in peril. Speaking on behalf of the older generation, he prayed to Bhagavan for a New Role, New Vision and New Action...to rejuvenate and move ahead. He pleaded Bhagavan to help them, the senior devotees, to take the Youth forward.

After Prof. Venkataraman's short speech, the most sacred moment of the morning arrived when Bhagavan beckoned for the mic.

"Man is estimating himself to be great; without being human he cannot be a human being; if he understands the qualities and manifests human nature, he can be called a true human," exhorted Bhagavan. "Ego and attachment are the two worst enemies of man today. Man will lose everything because of the poison called ego."

"Think of Mother and Father with gratitude". Narrating the story of a person who was in danger of being killed, where instead of calling out God for help as Mother (Amma) or Father (Appa), who preferred to yell 'ayyo' helplessly, Bhagavan said, "The divine Mother is ever ready to come running to you. Mother is God; there is no other God beyond the Mother; once we forget this fact we will have problems." Bhagavan further exhorted the gathering to respect every woman with gratitude and serve them.

"Greatness does not lie in the number of books read; instead, it depends on how one conducts himself. By virtue of humility, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar attained a great name..." Bhagavan went on to narrate instances from the life of this great man who stood as an ideal for modern youth.

After the Divine Discourse bhajans continued as instructed by Bhagavan and by the time the bhajans concluded the students had the prasadam vessels neatly arranged in one of the corners of the Sai Kulwant hall, waiting for the Divine command to start the distribution. A few students went to Bhagavan with the prasadam containers, one had tamarind rice and the other laddus (sweet delicacy). The distribution commenced immediately after Bhagavan graciously blessed the prasadam. The devotees on the other hand, displayed an excellent example of discipline. They were seated in neat rows which facilitated a smooth distribution. The students and staff served the entire gathering. A special announcement was made requesting the assembled devotees not to leave the mandir premises without partaking the prasadam. You could see the joy on their faces as they relished the hot and sweet prasadam. It really was rejuvenating after the nightlong fast and physical strain.

Bhagavan retired to Yajur Mandiram at 9:50 a.m. leaving His children overwhelmed with His love-filled blessings.

***Tera Pyaar Teri Yaadein* – A presentation by X and XII class students on February 21st 2007**

This joyful and touching occasion was staged by the tenth and twelfth standard of the Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School who presented a programme entitled *Tera Pyaar Teri Yaadein*, a combination of songs and speeches through which the students expressed their love and gratitude to Bhagavan.

Bhagavan arrived in the Sai Kulwant hall at 4:15 pm and straight away came to the portico. He called one of the boys and enquired about the programme, giving His permission for it to start straight away.

The programme lasted for about fifty five minutes and was a moving experience for one and all. Speeches were made in different languages such as English, Sanskrit, Telugu, Hindi, Marathi, Punjabi, Tamil, Malayalam, Oriya, Bengali and Nepali. In their own style through poetry, speeches or conversations, boys expressed their love and gratitude to Bhagavan. The boys shared with the audience the intimate moments they had with Bhagavan. Bhaskar Sai Krishna, a student of the twelfth standard said,

“Bhagavan, lessons learnt at Your lotus feet are lessons that remain etched in my heart. One of the most important lessons that I have learnt is that irrespective of my age at every step you are always there, caring for me and guiding me.

It was after the sports meet in my second standard that I fell seriously ill and in spite of all medications, my health showed no sign of improvement. I used to repeatedly vomit and was very weak. My parents and teachers were very anxious and asked me to pray to you. It was a few days later that one morning You blessed us all with Padanamaskar. While giving Padanamaskar You asked me how I was and I spontaneously replied, ‘I am fine’. But, all knowing that You are, You, with the love of a thousand, nay, infinite mothers looked into my eyes and said, ‘No, you are not fine.’ Creating vibhuti for me You asked me to take it.

I took the vibhuti and my health took a ‘U’-turn for the best. Bhagavan, I am so grateful to you, for all that You have done for me, for all that You have taught me and, for all that You are To Me.”

The undercurrent of the entire programme was love and gratitude. K. Dhananjay of the twelfth standard recalled how he missed the opportunity to join Bhagavan’s school in the first standard, but then it was Bhagavan’s assurance – “Come in your eleventh and I shall give you a seat” - made ten years ago which blessed him with the unique opportunity to become His student in 2005! With a heart overflowing with gratitude and love, he said,

“Swami, if anyone would ever ask me what love does, I would tell them that love can touch just one time, but it would last forever and forever and forever....”

The songs, speeches and poems were all drenched with this theme. Their education, their health, their life... everything they attributed to His love. Recounting a miraculous incident when Swami gave him a new life, Sri Chakra Sai, said, “When I was a little boy barely 5 years old, I was extremely sick. I was always running with a fever and cough. No ice creams, no fruits, no sweets. My life was terrible. Then one fine day, our family came to Brindavan for Swami’s darshan. He blessed everyone, except us. That day was Narayan Seva day. Swami again came out and walking straight to me picked up a fistful of chocolates and showered them on me. One chocolate touched my chest and lo! My heart boosted. I was absolutely fine from that moment onwards. No fever. No cough. Added to it, that year I was blessed to join the Primary school and the first special item I got was an ice cream! Swami you miraculously cured me and you saved my mother’s life too. On a solitary night when my mother was all alone, You came in the guise of an auto driver and brought her home safely. In every step our family has taken we have always felt Your presence. We are ever grateful to You Swami.”

Sri Chakra Sai then sang a poignant couplet that reflected not only his feelings but the emotions of every student gathered there.

“Mother of mine You gave to me
All of my life to do as I please
All that I am is just cause of You
Mother sweet Mother of mine.”

The students dressed up in their traditional attire rendered heartwarming speeches in their mother-tongue and dedicated it as an offering to their Mother Sai. Apart from short speeches in various languages covering the whole geographic span of India, ranging from Nepali to Punjabi, and Tamil to Marathi, the presentation also included a vibrant dance that expressed the joyous moments the students spent under the compassionate care of Bhagavan. Interspersed with speeches were scintillating songs in different tongues - Telugu, Hindi and English.

Needless to say, Bhagavan was extremely touched with the presentation so suffused with pure feelings emanating from their devotion-filled hearts. So pleased was the Lord that He beckoned them near and materialized vibhuti for the mainstays of the program. He then spent some time with them, keenly looking at their extremely innovative card that had a laptop encased within it. Bhagavan, who looked fascinated by the creativity, saw the entire video presentation that relived the intimate moments the boys shared with their Mother Sai.

In the end, Swami blessed the pens the boys held for success in their forthcoming board examinations and assured them good results. At the same

time, He said, "Develop good character and live up to it when you go outside." All in all, it was a very memorable evening not only for the school boys but for everyone present who could witness the sweet relationship that always exists between Bhagavan and His students.

Chinese New Year Celebrations: 23 and 24 February, 2007

Thousands of Chinese devotees hailing from six South East Asian countries of Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Taiwan and Hong Kong assembled at the Lotus Feet of their Beloved Lord Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba to begin their new year on an auspicious note. The whole ashram was beautifully decorated with many festoons, traditional Chinese red buntings, and photos and sayings of Bhagavan. Large colorful hoardings contained many quotes on the theme of the Chinese New Year celebrations: 'Filial Piety'.

The festivities began on the evening of 23rd February. On this holy occasion, 36 Buddhist monks from the four major sects of Tibetan Buddhism namely Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya and Gelug assembled in Prasanthi Nilayam to pay their obeisance to Lord Sai Buddha. After Bhagavan granted darshan, He permitted the programme to commence. Two children offered flowers to Bhagavan. Then, a monk from each of the sects presented 'Kata' to Bhagavan. The Kata is a sacred cloth and an auspicious symbol that is presented to Lord Buddha praying for His grace in successful chanting of mantras. They also presented other sacred and auspicious symbols like 'Dharmachakra' (symbolising the wheel of transformation wrought by Buddha Dharma), 'Amitayu Tanka' (a painting of a deity who bestows long life), 'Stupa' (a replica of the religious monument that is in the shape of Lord Buddha seated in a meditative posture) and 'Chenrizig Mandala' (a three-dimensional geometrical representation of the universe).

Then the monks commenced the chanting of the sacred mantra "Om Mani Padme Hum". This six-syllable mantra is supposed to contain all aspects of the 84,000 sections of Lord Buddha's teachings and is believed to generate love, compassion and positive feelings that will uplift the world. The second mantra that was chanted was 'Samantabhadra' or the 'King of Prayers'. This mantra helps in awakening the mind and guiding it on the path of enlightenment towards Buddhahood, and also for universal peace. Following this, the monks chanted a special mantra dedicated to Bhagavan composed by His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Ogyen Trinley Dorje. The mantra seeks to have an eternal vision of the beautiful form of Lord Sai. This was followed by recitation of the Gayathri Mantra. At the end of the chanting session, as is the Buddhist custom, the merits accrued by the chanting of all the mantras and all the good deeds involved in the holy activity were dedicated for the greater health and happiness of all beings in the universe.

Following this, Capt. Ong, a devotee from Singapore addressed the gathering. Elaborating on the significance of the mantra 'Samantabhadra', he said that it is a compilation of teachings received by a person named Sudana, as he

progresses on his spiritual journey through 52 masters culminating in his finding the realized master Samantabhadra. Captain Ong said that perhaps he too would have passed under the tutelage of 52 such masters in his past lives, as a result of which he has now found refuge at the lotus Feet of his Samantabhadra, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. The evening programme concluded with Bhajans and Bhagavan graciously granted photographs to all the monks and participants of the programme.

24 February, 2007 heralded the beginning of the Chinese New Year – the year of the pig as per the Chinese zodiac. At 8.30 a.m., Bhagavan was led in to Sai Kulwant Hall in a procession by grand and colourful pageantry of lion dancers and men dressed in Chinese regal attire to the accompaniment of drum beats. He then came on to the dais and lit candles kept on a table that also had a statue of Lord Buddha and other traditional Chinese items laid out such as tea cups and mandarins.

Then Mr. Billy Fong Goon Poy, the Organising Chairman of the Chinese New Year Celebrations 2007, addressed the gathering. He began by saying that though the people of China and India look different, there are many similarities in their culture and beliefs. There are many parallels to the Hindu pantheon of gods like the Monkey-God Hanuman (who is immortal and known for his super-human strength) and Goddess Lakshmi (who bestows prosperity and welfare) in Chinese belief.

But by far the most striking aspect of commonality is the emphasis both cultures place on filial piety, the love and respect that one should have for one's parents. While Indian culture declares – "Matha, Pitha, Guru Daivam", that one should worship one's parents, teachers and guru as God, the Chinese declare 'Xiao' or filial piety as the paramount virtue every human should possess. He concluded by praying to Bhagavan that He should bless the Chinese people that more and more will come each year to Prasanthi Nilayam to celebrate the Chinese New Year, so much so that not just the Sai Kulwant Hall but even the Hillview Stadium should be filled with Chinese devotees!

After the speech, items like tea, mandarin, a special kind of cake, etc., considered auspicious in the Chinese tradition were offered to Bhagavan. Bhagavan also blessed and released a commemorative book on this occasion. Then a group of students from the Sri Sathya Sai Education in Human Values Programme from the participating countries recited Vedic mantras and also selected stanzas from "Di Zi Gui" that lays down the code of conduct for children and students. Each of those Chinese stanzas was followed by its meaning in English and depicted through dialogues from day to day happenings in our lives. The sweet voices of the little ones and the catchy melody were a treat to everyone's ears. This was followed by a choir presentation by the youth members. They sang traditional New Year Day songs and also some Bhajans in Chinese language.

The afternoon programme consisted of a drama titled – 'My Parents, My Treasure'. The story revolved around a businessman Mr. Chin Keong, a

widower with four young children and an aging father, and how each day he struggled to attend to their needs in addition to his professional responsibilities. One day he feels that he will no longer be able to devote his time and energy to all of them and so decides to send his aged father to an old age home. Apart from the loneliness and isolation that he would have to face, Keong's father is shocked that his son is going against the age-old Chinese practice and fundamental virtue of filial piety. Kim Leng, one of his grandsons, realises the trauma that his grandfather is going through, and the conversation between them beautifully brings out the importance of upholding filial piety through epic tales and the folklores of Chinese tradition and culture.

The drama concludes on an emotional, yet happy note where Kim convinces his father to keep his grandfather at home. The drama vividly captured the dilemma that every man faces in his daily life – the conflict between the age-old wisdom of profound ancient cultures and on one hand and the modern convenient material lifestyle on the other hand. At the end of the drama, Bhagavan granted photographs to all the participants. The evening concluded with Bhajans and Arati.

Bhagavan's love brings people together in the spirit of unity. The month of February witnessed this in the form of Maha Shivarathri and Chinese New Year where devotees from different parts of the globe gathered at the lotus Feet. This serene ever-flowing saga of love will continue to flow in all its grandeur, month after month, sanctifying the entire year. As we march into the month of March, we shall see for ourselves how devotees, like honeybees get attracted to the eternally blooming flower that is Sai to cherish the nectar of bliss. The pages of the Prasanthi Diary will be extremely joyous to share with you a complete account next month. Till then, Sairam.

- Heart2Heart Team

SWAMI AND ME

IN TUNE WITH THE DIVINE

....Incredible Experiences of Santoor Maestro Sri Shiv Kumar Sharma

A Skeptical Musician

I first came to know of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba from my family doctor, Dr. M.L. Shukla, in 1968. Initially, I was a bit skeptical about Baba's miraculous powers and I used to have arguments with Dr. Shukla. In those days, Bhagavan Baba used to visit Mumbai twice a year and used to stay at Dharmakshetra, Andheri.

One day, Dr. Shukla told me to stop these arguments and invited me to Dharmakshetra to have the Darshan of Bhagavan. Both of us went to Dharmakshetra. I had carried my instrument (Santoor) in the car, just in case I was called upon to play there. There were thousands of men and women of all age groups there, sitting and waiting for Swami to come. We too sat there, waiting, but Baba had been held up somewhere else. After waiting for more than an hour, we had to leave as I had some other engagement that evening.

After a few days, Dr. Shukla asked me again to accompany him to the residence of a devotee of Baba, where there was a constant manifestation of Vibhuthi from Baba's photograph. Here, I would like to mention that, in those days, I was still struggling very hard to establish my instrument (Santoor) in the classical field and it was a real challenge in my life. Dr. Shukla was a fatherly figure to me and was very keen that I get Bhagavan's blessings.

The First Miracle

We went to Vile Parle, a suburb of Mumbai, where this devotee of Baba lived. I saw a big framed photograph of Baba there, completely covered with Vibhuthi. In our presence this man wiped away the entire Vibhuthi and collected it in a small container. I sat in front of Baba's photograph and started playing my santoor. After an hour or so, when I had finished playing, I got up and went closer to Baba's photograph. To my astonishment, the entire glass frame of the photograph was fully covered by Vibhuthi! I could not believe my eyes, but what I saw was a fact. This was my first indirect experience of Baba.

After a year, when Baba again visited Mumbai, I received an invitation to visit Dharmakshetra and play my santoor in a special programme. I believe this was again organized by the efforts of Dr. Shukla who knew some people at Dharmakshetra. The programme took place inside a room, where Baba stays when He comes to Mumbai.

There were a selected number of people; amongst them were Manoj Kumar, a film actor and director, Mahendra Kapoor, a playback singer and many others. I performed first, followed by Mahendra Kapoor's song, and then a few

other musicians performed. After the programme, Swami talked to different people; I was sitting there watching and listening. In the end, Baba spoke to me. He said, "I liked your playing, I want to speak to you, come tomorrow morning." Next morning I was not free, but before I could say anything, Baba again said, "Tomorrow you are not free, but day after you are free, so come the day after." I could not believe it; He was reading my mind. I said, "Yes Baba, I will come the day after" to which He replied, "Bring your wife also with you."

‘My Home is in Your Heart’ - Baba

My wife Manorama and I reached Dharmakshetra early in the appointed day. After the Bhajan and Darshan, we were asked to go up to His residence and wait there. After a while, Baba called us inside His room. We were sitting in front of Baba with no one else in the room. Baba started talking! He told us everything about our lives, about my career, my struggle, the difficulties I was facing and then, he blessed us. Then, suddenly Baba asked, "What do you want?" I said, "Baba! I just want your blessings." Immediately, my wife said, "Baba, give him something." With a wave of his hand Baba materialized a ring with a golden bust of Baba embossed on it. He put the ring on my finger and said, "From today, this is your home; come to me any time you want and my home is in your heart." I cannot express in words the feelings I experienced at that moment. It was love personified in the form of Baba, the kind of love that I had never experienced before. We came out of that room quite dazed with that experience.

From then onwards, a new chapter began in my life; I had many experiences of Baba's omnipresence, and above all, His divine love which He always showered on us like a Divine Mother. After Baba gave me the ring, occasionally people would ask me, "After getting this ring, have you experienced a change for the better in your life?" One night, when I was visiting Jammu, my birthplace, before going to bed I told myself, "Actually speaking, there is not much change in my life." With this thought, I went to bed.

In the morning, when I woke up, I touched the ring to my forehead, and my eyes, as I used to do every morning. To my dismay and shock, I noticed that the golden bust of Baba was missing from the ring. Naturally, I was very upset. Since I was sleeping on the terrace of my house, I started searching for the missing bust of Baba in my bed, under the cot and all over the terrace, but, it was not found anywhere.

Suddenly, I realized that, because of my doubtful thoughts, this had happened. Thoroughly disappointed and dejected, I kept standing near the wall of the terrace. After a while, I looked down at the parapet and I could see some shining object there. It was Baba's golden bust! By no means was it possible that while I was sleeping in the middle of the terrace, the golden bust of Baba that I had seen before going to sleep could have come off my ring and landed on the parapet. I retrieved the golden bust from the parapet with great difficulty and tried to fix it back on the ring, but it did not work. I kept it

with the ring in a small silver container and used to take it with me wherever I was traveling.

In 1971, when I was in Sweden for some concerts, I saw Baba in my dream telling me, "Why don't you put on that ring?" When I woke up in the morning, I took out that silver container from my bag and tried once again to fix the golden bust on that ring with an adhesive. To my amazement this time it fixed! I came back to India after the concerts. A few months later, Baba came to Mumbai and I received a message that Baba would like me to play at Dhamakshetra next evening. I was very happy to have this invitation, but, the problem was that I had earlier already accepted a concert at Churchgate in Mumbai for that same evening and also, there was no tabla player available to accompany me. After a while, I got another message from Dharmakshetra, that Baba would like me to come even late and to play without a tabla player.

I was very happy. After finishing my concert at Churchgate, we directly drove to Dharmakshetra. Baba was sitting in the hall with some devotees and I played santoor without any tabla accompaniment. After I finished my performance, Baba asked the other devotees to leave. Now, only my wife, Dr. Shukla, my elder son Rohit, a couple of my friends and I were there. Baba asked, "how was your tour abroad?" I said, "Baba, with your blessings the tour went off well, but my ring.... " Before I could even finish the sentence, Baba said, "Yes, when you got that ring people started asking you questions. What benefit did you derive from this?" Although you believe in Baba, one day the doubt did come into your mind and the golden bust of Baba came off. Then Baba came in your dream one day and told you to put it on and since then, the ring is fine. Now, what is the problem?" After speaking to us thus, Baba blessed us and we experienced the same Divine Motherly love once again.

A Name Recited by the Divine

On Bhagavan's 60th Birthday in 1985, I had the privilege of being invited to give a Santoor recital. That evening's programme was taking place in the huge open area at the Hill View Stadium. The schedule of the programme was that I would give a performance on the Santoor first, followed by Baba's Discourse. But, in the evening, Baba changed the order. It was first Baba's Discourse and then my Santoor recital. I was very worried, thinking that after Baba's discourse, who would stay there for my programme? **After the discourse, suddenly Baba said, "Now Shiv Kumar Sharma will play Santoor, and he is a longtime devotee of Swami. So, if you want to experience divinity listen to his music, don't go."**

I was completely overwhelmed and tears started flowing from my eyes. I could not take it. I was unable to get up or move. I could not believe my ears, for in all these years Baba had never called me by my name. This was the first time I was hearing my name in the divine voice of Bhagavan. With great effort, I could get up and go on the stage. Emotionally I was in no position to play. Baba, who was already on the stage, put His arm lovingly on my shoulder. That had an electrifying effect on me and I became totally normal

and started playing. After the concert, Baba materialized a diamond ring and put it on my finger.

It is not possible to understand Baba's Leelas. I have also undergone a period where, for a few years, Baba did not pay any attention to me. He just gave me blessings from a distance and we had no conversations at all. Maybe Baba teaches us in this way so that we should not get attached to His physical form. But, He never leaves His devotees, wherever they may be.

The Eternal Guardian

On November 13-14 in 1998, my son Rahul and I had gone to Dubai for a concert. My wife was also with us, along with Shafat Ahmed Khan, our tabla player. A day before the concert our hosts planned to take us for a sand dune safari. We left Dubai in two cars, my wife and I, accompanied by three other people, while my son Rahul, Shafat, our host, as well as a couple of people were in the Land Cruiser, a brand new car. The Land Cruiser was a few cars behind us as we made our way on the highway.

After a couple of minutes there was a call on the mobile phone in our cars, asking us to go back. We drove back not knowing what had happened, till we arrived at a spot on the highway where the driver stopped the car. Then, we realized that the car in which my son Rahul and others were traveling, was lying upside down in the middle of the highway and was totally smashed. There was an ambulance and a few police vehicles surrounding the smashed land cruiser. My wife had become hysterical and it was difficult to control her. Looking at the condition of the car, it was obvious that nobody would have survived.

Suddenly, we saw Rahul standing on one side along with the other passengers. Later, we came to know that their car was traveling at 135 km/hour when one of the tyres burst. The driver tried his best to control the car, but it hit the railing on the side and flipped upside down and started spinning. Rahul, who was sitting next to the driver, shouted, "Baba.... Baba, Baba, Baba," while the car landed with a thud on its roof. For a few minutes, there were no vehicles coming from behind, as if somebody had stopped all of traffic. After a while, some cars came and stopped. The people helped the passengers out of the smashed car.

Nobody could believe that all the passengers traveling in the car were unharmed through this entire ordeal. Some of them had little bruises, but Rahul, who was in the front seat was without any bruises! They were all taken to a doctor's clinic in Dubai for a check up. As soon as they entered the clinic, they saw a big photograph of Baba smiling and looking at them! Baba gave the message that He had saved the lives of my son Rahul and all the other passengers.

On 21 November, 1998, we went to Puttaparthi to attend Bhagavan's Birthday celebrations. The first day Baba did not talk to us. But on November 22, Baba came and asked me, "Where is son?" Rahul was sitting next to me and so I

said, "Baba, he is here." Baba asked again, "Where is son?" Baba kept on repeating the same question. Suddenly I realised and said, "Swami gave him a new life." Swami said, "Yes, I know," and then left. On the morning of November 24, during the interview, Swami narrated the entire episode, how the accident happened, how Rahul shouted 'Baba... Baba, Baba, Baba,' and Swami said, "That time somebody was sitting with Me here, and I told him Shiv Kumar's son has met with a very serious accident but he has been saved."

"We Always Feel His Presence"

Thirty years have passed since I had my first Darshan of Bhagavan Baba at Dharmakshetra, Mumbai in 1969 and had the opportunity of giving a Santoor recital in His presence. Since then, hundreds of Santoor recitals have been given in the presence of large audiences at several places in India and also abroad. By Baba's Grace, my son Rahul too had joined me in giving Santoor recitals with me in the Divine presence as well as at other places. We can count ourselves among the few fortunate ones, who have had the opportunity of giving vocal and instrumental music recitals in the presence of Baba at Prashanthi Nilayam, where the audience is in thousands belonging to various parts of India and several other countries. Everywhere, in India and abroad, we have always felt the presence of Bhagavan Baba and His Grace and Blessings pouring on us in abundance.

Courtesy: "Baba Is God"

WHAT TO ASK FROM SWAMI?

This is the transcript of a talk delivered by Sri Sanjay Mahalingam in the divine presence of Bhagavan Baba during the Dasara celebrations on October 1, 2006.

Offering my loving salutations at the Lotus Feet; revered elders, sisters and brothers.

*Yoganandakari Ripukshayakari Dharmarthanishthakari
Chandrarkanala Bhaasamaonanalajahi Trayalokyarakshakari
Sarveshwarya Samasthavaanchithakari Kashipuradhishwari
Bhikshamdehi Kripaavalambanakari Mata Annapurneshwari*

*Drishyaadrishya Prabhoota Vaahanakari Bramhaandabhaandodari
Leelananatakasutrabhedhanakari Vigyanadeepankuri
Shri Vishweshamanaprasaadanakari Kashipuraadhishwari
Bhikshamdehi Kripaavalambanakari Mata Annapurneshwari*

These scriptures declare the most Benevolent Mother as the one who grants the bliss of yoga.

The destroyer of foes – *Ripukshayakari*;
The protector of all the three worlds – *Trayalokyarakshakari*;
The one who grants all prosperity and auspiciousness; the one who fulfills all the aspirations of the heart; to that Mother I supplicate and pray to Her to grant me alms.

She is the one who resides in the sacred cave of *Kailasha – Moksha Dwara Kapatapatana Kari* – the one who flings open the gates of liberation; to that Divine, Benevolent Mother I supplicate and pray to Her to grant me alms.

And what do we seek from Her?

*Annapurney, Sadaapurney, Shankara Prana Vallabhey
Jnana, Vairagya, Sidhyartham; Bikshamdehi Cha Parvati*
From that Mother I seek the boon of Renunciation and Wisdom.

It was about three years back in His *Gurupurnima* Discourse, Bhagavan said:

“I am willing to grant anything to anybody; but nobody asks! And even those who ask; ask for grass; but don’t ask for Grace!”

In His second Discourse; during these celebrations Bhagavan said so poetically and mentioned such a sublime and profound Truth! He said:

“You all breathe impure air! But I breathe the Pure air which consists of the prayers of My devotees. I inhale the air of the aspirations of My near

and dear ones; and what do I exhale? I exhale Blessings! ‘Yes! Yes! Yes! Tathastu! Tathastu!’ - What you ask; I will grant!”

When we are in association with such a Benevolent Mother; it is all that much more important for us to know what to ask? What to ask from Swami?

‘Grant Me Renunciation and Wisdom’

Jnana, Vairagya Sidhyartham; Bhiksham Dehi Cha Parvati

Oh Lord of Lords! Grant me if anything – Renunciation and Wisdom!

What is *Vairagya*? Many great seers describe it in various ways - let me quote from Swami’s Discourse – Swami says: “*Vairagya* is the ABC of *sadhana*. It is the very first sign of a spiritual life.”

What is *Vairagya*? *Vairagya* is the absence of *raga* – or attachment. It is detachment from the pleasures of this world and also from those obtainable in heaven after attaining the firm conviction that they are evanescent and fraught with grief. *Vairagya* is not necessarily abandoning family ties and fleeing into the loneliness of the jungle; but giving up the false idea, the false notion that objects are permanent; and can yield real joy.

Bhagavan adds that no object is without fault; no joy unmixed with pain; no action untainted by selfishness. Therefore be warned – develop detachment and save yourself from grief.

Letting Go

There was once a sadhu, who was a sadhu only by – if I may say so – vocation; but not by thought, word and deed; for he had donned the ochre robe not because he had any immortal longings for liberation from the thralldom of perennial plurality; but because this life suited his laziness and indolence.

This fake *sadhu* had a small hut by the Ganges; the water of the Ganges quenched his thirst and the generosity of the gullible pilgrims satiated his hunger – enviable was his position.

One day, while sitting on the banks of the Ganges as he was entertaining his idle curiosity; he saw a shiny object floating down the stream. Without a second thought, he plunged into the water; swam with deft strokes; reached the shiny object; retrieved it out of the water; held it close to his bosom; claimed it as his and to his utter amazement and joy he saw that it was a beautiful silver vessel. With that vessel held in one hand, he started swimming back to the bank.

But all was not well – man proposes; God disposes. He realized that the current was so strong that the more he tried to extricate himself, the more viciously it sucked him to its center; for he had only one hand to save himself!

After a desperate struggle, the instinct of self-preservation gained the better of his greed. He let go of the vessel and with both his hands and with a Herculean effort, he swam back to safety. On reaching the land he looked back and saw the shiny object floating away from him. He couldn't bear the anguish and burst out into tears and wept and wailed: "Oh! I lost my silver vessel!"

A real sage – a man of genuine dispassion and renunciation - was seeing all this panorama, all this drama. He came to him and said: "Friend! That vessel was floating down the stream and would have continued in its course had you not interrupted it. You swam to it, gleefully grasped it, claimed it as yours, then to save your own life you let it go and now you say you lost your vessel? When was it yours? Is not all this sorrow your own making?"

Sisters and Brothers, like the anchorite of our story Bhagavan says that we too come to have a flawed, a mistaken relationship with the objects of this world. **First we painstakingly strive to possess them and then madly wrestle to preserve them – all the while forgetting the fundamental fact that everything in this *prapancha* (world) follows the law of movement and change.** The only constant is change they say - we forget that everything is in a state of flux.

As Bhagavan always says, "This *prapancha* is nothing but reaction, reflection and resound. That is all it is!" Therefore the dictum is: "Welcome all that comes to you, stand not in the way of that which departs you."

Real Renunciation

Bhagavan further adds that real renunciation is to be totally contented, perfectly happy with what is here and now. For what is, will be. What is not, will never be! Then why grieve? To be completely at ease, relaxed and contented with what is – is real renunciation.

But then why does the mind get attracted to temporary objects? Because it has not seen the Permanent. The mind runs after these fleeting objects because it has not yet seen what is real joy. It has not yet dissolved itself in God even for a glimpse of what is real bliss – what is true contentment. That is why it runs madly after these so called objects.

Doesn't Lord Krishna say in the Geeta?

*Vishaya Vinivartantey Niraharasya Dehinah
Rasavrajam Rasopyasya Param Drishtva Nivartatey*

For a man who turns away from objects; the objects also will turn away from him – that is the law. But the essential craving still remains, which too vanishes when '*Param Drishtva Nivartatey*', when the Supreme is beheld!

Bhagavan mercifully commanded me just now to say something on *Ramatatwa* – the essence of Lord Rama. Just a thought that comes to my

mind and let me think aloud – in Telugu ‘Ra’ means to come. Ra – Randi. And in Tamil – which happens to be my mother tongue – ‘Ma’ is a word used to connote Love. What I understand of the word ‘Rama’ is: ‘Come to me, oh my dear!’

“Come to me, oh my dear! Come and fill me for I have come to realize this much after so many lives of arduous struggle that all happiness and misery is only black and white. Real color, real beauty, real happiness is only union with God. Therefore; please come to me! With a devoted heart, on my knees and with tears strolling down my eyes, I supplicate before Thee and pray to Thee to come to me!”

What is Devotion? Devotion is often mistaken to be foolish sentimentality and weak emotionalism. Devotion is as far from emotionalism as is darkness from light; as is sun from the moon.

Devotion is Intense Sacrifice

Bhagavan in one of His *china kathas* (little stories) mentions how once the great sage Narada went to teach the *gopis* (devoted cowherd folk of the Lord) the secret of wisdom. And he was so taken aback – so to say stunned into silence – by their phenomenal devotion for Lord Krishna. Krishna was the taste of their tongues; the sight of their eyes; the sound of their ears; the touch of their skin – that he went back and composed what is known to be one of the most authoritative texts on the doctrine of Devotion – The Narada Bhakti Sutras.

Let me present before you the first six sutras of the Narada Bhakti Sutras.

Athato Bhaktim Vyakhyasyamah

Let us now expound the Doctrine of Bhakti.

The second one says:

Sa Tasmin Parama Prema Rupa

It is of the nature of Supreme Love - where there is no one else but God; nothing else but God; nothing is as dear to the heart as God.

Amrita Swarupa Cha

It is also of the nature of Immortality - because the devotee is so saturated with the thought of the Lord, that his entire realm of existence shifts from the changing Universe to the changeless *Achyuta*, to the changeless Divine – therefore he comes to experience the Supreme Bliss of the Lord - which is of the nature of Immortality.

Yallabdhava Puman Siddho Bhavati; Amrito Bhavati; Tripto Bhavati

Once having attained the Love of God – Bhagavan says: “Love is his own reward, He is completely satisfied, totally satiated.”

Yat Prapya Na Kinchid Vanchhati

Na Shochati; Na Dveshti; Na Ramatey; Na Uthsahi Bhavati

After having attained that he doesn't desire anything else – he doesn't grieve; he doesn't hate; no enthusiasm is left in him to seek anything else.

Ya gyatva Matto Bhavati; Sthabhdho Bhavati; Atma Ramo Bhavati

After attaining which, after knowing which, automatically without any effort or without any spiritual discipline - just by the intensity of his Love - unconsciously he gets pushed into deep meditations. He gets sucked so to say into the quietness of his soul and comes to enjoy the bliss of his Self.

This is how Bhakti is explained in the scriptures. So we see, Bhakti, though in the beginning maybe so, but, in its culmination, it is not mere emotion, mere feeling - but an intense sacrifice.

Na Karmana, Na Prajaya; Dhaney; Na Tyagey; Naikey Amritatvo Manushubho

Once while talking of the Bhagavat Gita, Sri Ramakrishna Parmahansa said, "Gita! Gita! Gita!" and suddenly he started saying, "Tagi! Tagi! Tagi!" He then explained: "Reverse of the word 'Gita', That is 'Tagi'. And that is the very essence of the entire Bhagavat Gita – Sacrifice! Sacrifice! Sacrifice!"

Giving Up Everything

What to sacrifice? There was once a great King who got stung – if I may say so – by the serpent of renunciation. He wanted to renounce everything. He sought out his preceptor and said, "Master! Show me the way of renunciation. I want to give up." The Master asked, "What will you give up?" He said, "I will give up all my wealth and distribute it amongst the poorest of the poor of my kingdom." The Master then said, "Really? But does the wealth belong to you? You have collected it by the taxes of your subjects. How can you distribute it and renounce it my son?"

He said, "Master, I will renounce the throne. I will leave the kingdom and walk into the forest." He said, "Really? The throne is entrusted to you. You are only a trustee – you don't own it; how can you renounce it?"

He then said, "Master, I will renounce this very body. I will give up my life." He said, "This body belongs to the Nature. It is made up of five elements. Who did ever say that it belongs to you? How can you give that up?"

In frustration he said, "Master, then what do I give up?" He said, "The one who wants to renounce; give him up. Who wants to renounce? 'I'! Give that 'I' up. Once that 'I' is given up; nothing would remain to be renounced. Nothing would remain to be attained."

"Show Me your mind! I will tell you how to control it." - Baba

About three years back, while Swami was walking here, suddenly one brother got up and said, "Swami! Help me control my mind." Swami said, "Really! I will

help.” At first He joked – He patted him on his cheek and said, “Your grandfather could not control his mind either, what will you control!” There was a burst of laughter! Then Swami became serious; He said: “I will help you. I will definitely help you. Show Me your mind! I will tell you how to control it.” And walked away.

He said, “Show Me your mind; I will tell you how to control it.” Nobody understood anything – we all sat, Swami walked His way.

The scriptures say: “Find the ego, destroy it, stamp it, annihilate it and finish it - but first find it! Where is it?”

Sometimes walking alone on a street in the night, when suddenly we think that there is a ghost behind us – on close observation we find out that what we thought was a ghost was nothing but a play of shadows. It was a shadow of a big lamp-post or a big tree. **What was required was close observation. If it had not been closely observed; this shadow in the form of a ghost would have terrified us, would have scared us and would have made our lives miserable. But on close observation, we conclude that it never was there!**

The Vanishing Guest

Bhagavan tells us in a *chinna katha* of that guest who vanishes. There was a man who gate-crashed so to say into a marriage party – you know, in Hindu marriages, we have feasts for four or five days. The bridegroom’s party thought that he’s the bride’s best man, so they lavished all kinds of hospitality on him and treated him with special regard.

The bride’s party - on observing this - thought that he was a very important near one of the bridegroom’s party, so they too lavished their hospitality. So altogether, this guest without belonging to anybody, was having a nice time. One day, there was a point when both the parties came together. This man sensed danger and vanished. They searched for him but could not find him anywhere because he had vanished!

Bhagavan says, “Same is the case with the Ego!” What is the ego? It is nothing but a so-called feeling that there is a distinct individual entity - separate from others - who has a birth, who has a death, who has bondage and finally has to be liberated. Giving up of this idea - Swami says, is real *Jnana*; is real Wisdom.

The Grace to Attain Wisdom

When a strong breeze is blowing, all that is required is to unfurl the sails. The boat will be automatically taken to its destination – no rowing, nothing is required. A strong spiritual breeze of Bhagavan’s Grace is blowing. He assures active assistance - not passive witnessing - but active assistance to whoever wishes to tread the Godward path – all that we need to do is unfurl the sails of *bhakti*, *jnana* and *vairagya*!

Uthishtha, Jagrita, Prapya Varani Bodhata says the *Katha Upanishad*:
Arise, awake, seek out the learned Masters; sit at their feet and know the Truth!

We have found Swami, we have sat at His Feet. He has inculcated in us real understanding. It is up to us to wander about like a vagabond, or to sincerely tread the path and seek His Grace.

In the second chapter of the Gita, Arjuna asks Lord Krishna:
Stithatpragnasya Ka Basha Samadhistasya Keshava

What is the mark of an enlightened man? How does he walk? How does he stand? How does he smile? How does he sit?

The Lord replies in the next seventeen verses and He says:
Prajahati Yada Kaaman Sarvaan Paartha Manogataan
Atmanyevatmana Tushtaha Stithatpragnyastadochyatey

One who has given up all desires of his heart, and is able to satisfy himself totally by the joy of his own Self, he is a real man of established wisdom!

Kurmonganeeva Sarvashah

Like a tortoise who is able to withdraw his limbs, the man who is able to withdraw his senses and fix his mind on the steady current of God, he is a man of renunciation.

He further adds that he, in whom all the desires enter, but make no difference – like all the rivers flow into an ocean – he is the man eligible for Supreme Peace. None else!

But what is this established Wisdom? The scriptures say three words: The Knowledge of the Self!

There is a very paradoxical verse in the *Kena Upanishad*. It says, 'He who says that he knows Brahman, doesn't know! He who says that he doesn't know Brahman, doesn't know! But he who says that he knows not, but yet he knows; he alone knows!'

So what is the Knowledge of the Self? Anybody - for that matter even a *Sadguru* – can never tell us what is the Truth! For, it cannot be known because it is the final Ultimate Absolute Knower of all that is known! It cannot be seen because it is the final, Ultimate Absolute Seer of all that is seen! It cannot be heard because it is the final Ultimate, Absolute Hearer of all that is heard!

How can the fire ever feel its heat? How can the water ever feel its own dampness? How can the eye ever see itself? How can I ever know myself? I can only be myself! And to subjectively experience that state of Pure Being,

where there is nothing known, nothing heard, nothing seen but there is only Pure Being – that alone is Wisdom! And the only thing that prevents us from reaching that state is attachment.

The Chains of Attachment

Attachment – it is said – is of various types. But there are primarily three strong fetters that bind a man. Attachment to the society: What will they say? What will the world think? What will this action have an impact on others? What is their opinion? Attachment to the world, to the society – to the opinion of others.

The second they say is attachment to the body.

And the third it is said is attachment to intellectual knowledge. In the New Testament it is said that a camel can go through the eye of a needle – you know that a needle has a small hole at its head, through which we put the thread. The New Testament says that a camel can go through the eye of a needle but a wealthy man cannot go through the gates of heaven. In one of His Discourses Swami quoted this and then said: “Even the rich man can go through the gates of heaven, but a scholar cannot!” The most difficult attachment to give up is the attachment to intellectual knowledge.

Attachment to the opinion of others: A very famous story is told of *Mullah Nassirudin* – he was moving along with his son on a journey. The son was sitting on a mule and he was walking by its side. A passerby came and he said: “*Mullah!* What is this? This is real *kali-yuga!* The son is comfortably sitting on the mule, and you’re walking by its side. What irreverence! What disrespect!”

The *Mullah* told the son to get down, and he got on the mule. As they proceeded further, another passerby came: “Oh my God! This is real *kali-yuga!* Look at those small, tender feet of that little boy! You’re making him walk on this rough road and you’re comfortably sitting on the mule! You’re the father who’s supposed to take care of him. Very bad!”

The *Mullah* said, “Neither of us will sit!” They both started walking - each on the either side of the mule. A few minutes later another passerby came and he said, “*Mullah!* What is this foolishness? For what did you buy this mule? To give it a walk? It is walking happily and both of you are walking by its side!” So both of them sat on the mule! They went a few meters, another passerby came and he said, “What is this *Mullah!* You want to kill this mule? I agree you bought it, but so what? Don’t burden it so much!”

The Upanishads say, what can a thousand tongues do to you? Seek the Inner Voice, hear it clearly, and follow the Inner Guidance. Let the world say what it has to say and enjoy Itself!

Finally - the attachment to the body. There is Swami’s *chinna katha* again. An orthodox Brahmin lady who set about on a journey, and was very

particular about the purity of the water, the food that she consumes, who cooks it, etc.

It was a very dry area and in those areas, bags were made of animal skin – they were very clean – they were well washed; but they were made of animal skin. And water used to be given to thirsty people from those bags. So when the man came, the lady asked, “Is that bag clean?” The man was a man of real wisdom. He said, “Madam! The bag which contains this water is far cleaner than the bag into which it will be poured! The so called body - which you are so fond of – if only you could see the inside, all your fondness will disappear! Because the mirror only shows the face – it doesn’t show what is inside!”

The amount of time that we spend before the mirror, watching our own face – if only half that time was spent watching our soul, God will be our constant companion!

That is the third most difficult attachment to give up.

*Aham Mameti Bhavodehakshaadaa Vanatmani
Adhyasoyam Nirastavyo Vidusha Swatmanishtayah
Gyatva Sam Pratyagatmaanam Budhitat Vriti Sakshinam
Soham Ityevya Sadvritya Anaatman Yatmamatim*

Foolish people identify themselves and get this feeling of *Aham Mameti* – ‘I’ and ‘Mine’ in this body and these organs, etc. Put an end to it!

‘Your presence is My presence’ - Baba

How? *Adhyasoham Nivarstabhyo*

How? *Vidhusa Svatanishtaya*

By constantly identifying ourselves with our own Pure Being – which is Pure Existence at the very presence - by identifying oneself with it, put an end to it!

Once, some ex-students who are currently working in Delhi, came for Bhagavan’s Darshan and Swami was very kind to call them for an interview. One of the boys complained to Swami, “Swami, I am not able to feel Your presence in Delhi – what should I do?” Swami said, “Oh! You’re not able to feel My presence? But are you able to feel your presence?” The boy said, “Yes Swami! I am able to feel my presence.” Swami said, “Feel it well, for your presence is My presence!” The presence is presence; existence is existence!

All said and done, brothers and sisters, about *Vairagya, Jnana, Self, Brahman* – they really have their place; but what we have to understand is that there is nothing greater than the Love for Swami.

If we were ever to see an experience, even for a fraction of a second – the Love that Bhagavan feels for all of us - this body will fall away like a dry leaf!

We will not be able to even bear the Love that Bhagavan feels for all of us - each and every second!

Bhagavan says, "Day and night I think of My devotees!" - and it is not a mere statement!

"Day and night I'm thinking of you – how can I help you; how can I alleviate your misery; how can I show you what is Real joy; how can I wean you away from these ephemeral, transient attractions that take away your mind? How can I get your mind to My Lotus Feet and show you what is true contentment?"

Santushtah Satatam yogi – A real yogi is a man of contentment!

"How do I show you I am the Prince of Dancers; I alone know the pain of teaching you each and every step!" – says Bhagavan.

Ramana Maharishi used to say that there are only two ways to God: "Either inquire into the Self with entire concentration and with a completely Integrated Being find the Self and destroy your mind; or give me your mind completely and I will destroy it for you!"

I have heard Swami say something to this effect: "Complete self-surrender is the end to spiritual sadhana!"

And what is self-surrender? Not to want anything; not to fear anything; not to be anxious about anything; not to be curious about anything – to be completely contented only in the Love of God and to leave oneself entirely in His hands – that is true self-surrender.

With these few words I seek Bhagavan's permission to conclude.

Jai Sai Ram!

TSUNAMI OF LOVE

By Ms. Vaishnavi Nair

This article was sent to us by a young reader, Ms. Vaishnavi Nair, a class XI student at Chennai who has completed her courses in Sathya Sai Bal Vikas. She, along with her parents, were able to participate in the recently held Athi Rudra Maha Yajna in Chennai, in January 2007, and here is a first hand report of her experience.

‘A Trail Of Inexplicable Happiness’ in Chennai

A tsunami is unnoticeable in the open ocean – a long, low wave whose power becomes clear only when it reaches shore and breaks. Spotting the wave while it is still crossing the ocean is tricky, which explains why so few are aware of the one that is approaching.

On 19 Jan 2007, the city of Chennai was hit by another tsunami. But this time around, with a huge difference! It left a trail of inexplicable happiness and indescribable joy. Such was the impact of the torrent of love.

When Swami declared that the second Athi Rudra Maha Yagnam (ARMY) will be performed in Chennai, the hundreds of thousands of devotees in Tamil Nadu were elated. The last time Swami graced the city was nearly ten years ago. All of sudden, ARMY became the buzzword everywhere - be it at the ex-Balavikas conference or the Sevalal meeting.

It goes without saying the Lord’s mission moves on with clockwise precision as per His sankalpa. But to be a small instrument in the divine scheme of things, one needs to be really blessed. For all us in Chennai, especially the Sai youth, this was a tremendous opportunity to participate in His work and partake divine grace. And participate we did. With divine guidance behind us this is no great surprise.

Being the last quarter of the academic year my school was not ready to grant a week of leave of absence at a stretch. But the Lord took care. My duties were arranged on week-ends. As an ex-balavikas student, I was fortunate to be asked to serve in the balavikas stall set-up near the ARMY site. Many parents along with their kids visited our stall. When they realized that even these teachings are imparted absolutely free, they were blown off their feet. Several of them wanted to enroll their children immediately.

Meanwhile, news of the Yagna spread like wildfire. The gathering crowd swelled in numbers. People from far off towns, cities and villages began thronging the Yagna site as well as Sundaram (where Swami was residing). They realized that this Yagna is not a common occurrence. Conducted after a few millenniums for the prosperity and peace of humanity, only an Avatar can manifest such abundant blessings.

But apart from participating in the Yagna, the milling crowd prayed for a glimpse of the Lord. And Swami in His infinite love knows the yearnings of His devotees. To the great delight of all the devotees He went around the entire stretch of the hall. Thousands who witnessed this experienced a unique happiness. Even long-time devotees of Swami confessed to have experienced a higher intensity of His presence.

Thousands continued to pour in. The unique feast of bhajans, rudram chanting, devotional and instrumental music, all in the presence of the Lord Himself is a once in a life time opportunity. And nobody wanted to miss it.

Such Close Darshan of the Lord

The ever merciful Lord too, started giving even more. I have never seen Swami giving so much Darshan at such close quarters before. And the crowd behaved in a very orderly way which is unusual when it comes to such large gatherings.

As the numbers starting swelling outside Sundaram, more sevadals were drafted into service. I was again fortunate. I too was called in. As the proverbial squirrels, two of us were given the role of distributing drinking water and assisting elderly ladies on to their chairs.

Going around the crowd was a great revelation. It opened up another facet of Swami to me. The experiences gained were truly memorable.

Noticing the polite and calm countenance of Sevadals, the police officials on duty changed their tack. They also took to the Sai way. It looked like one big family – *vasudeva kuthumbhakam!* People, who could not get inside Sundaram, waited patiently outside singing bhajans and chanting Sai Gayathri. Total strangers were greeting each other with 'Sairam!'

The 'Sun' Provides Shady Shelter

Though the numbers increased everyday, the crowd behaved the same - calm, cheerful and patient eagerly awaiting the Lord's darshan. Swami fulfilled their wishes by going around every little path way, even into the street far outside Sundaram. Observing that his devotees are waiting in the hot sun, the merciful Lord's kind heart melted. He asked his attendants not to hold the umbrella over Him. Instead, He directed the organizers to erect shamianas inside Sundaram compound.

Swami Acknowledges the Seva

The hot sun kept us, the water-girls, busy. Most people sought for more than just one glass of water. As the crowd kept increasing this was not an easy task; it was turning to be an arduous job. Tried and clueless, I thought I should at least attempt what Draupadi did to Krishna when faced with the situation of having to feed thousands. Praying to Swami, I too imagined offering Him a cup (somehow the color of the cup happened to be red) of water hoping that it

will quench the thirst of everyone present. Though I felt stupid trying to be like Draupadi, it made me feel good. Thereafter, I got along with my work. After the crowd disbursed, we all returned home.

The next day, an *akka* (elder sister) of mine, came rushing to me after Darshan. It seems she had a dream. She saw Swami accepting water from me in a red cup! The eyes of everyone around welled with tears of happiness and wonderment when I told them about my quiet little offering. Look at the mercy of the Lord. Even in such trivial things, He has taken care to indicate to us that He has seen and heard the prayer. Truly, we were all blessed to have this wonderful opportunity.

The profound impact of Swami on ordinary Chennaites was overwhelming and beyond words. Devotees like me were able to know a little more the “ways of Sai”. Inscrutable are HIS ways. Quietly without any fanfare, He brought in Sai Ganga to quench the thirst of Chennai. Then He set about transforming and energizing barren hearts with love and spirituality and guiding all of us to cross the *samsara sagara* (ocean of life) the righteous way! As He left on 31 January, the assembled sea of humanity realized what swept them off their feet and warmly wrapped them up. **It was the infinite tsunami of love!**

HOW I BECAME FASCINATED WITH SAI – Part 1

This is the transcript of the conversation between Dr. Keki Mistry, an eminent consultant orthodontist and a long standing devotee from Mumbai, and Prof. G Venkataraman aired on Radio Sai a few weeks ago.

Prof. Venkataraman (GV): Sai Ram Doctor. It is very nice to see you here in the studio, which is a new *Avatar* of the building you have been used to long ago, when it was first constructed. [Earlier the Studio building was the EHV centre] It is a wonderful Studio, blessed by Swami and from this Studio, we have brought the experiences of so many devotees to people all over the world. It is now my pleasure to have you chat with us here. Could you introduce yourself briefly, tell us all about yourself, your professional career and how you came to Swami? All our listeners would be very happy to learn that.

“To Be Able to Speak is Itself a Miracle”

Dr. Keki Mistry (KM): SaiRam to all of you. At the outset can I start by saying how I am very proud and privileged to be here with you Professor and in a program that bears Swami's name. I am really honored to be here. My name is Dr. Keki Minochia Mistry. I am an Orthodontist practicing in the city of Mumbai for the last 45 years. I am in practice, I am in teaching, and I am in research. I have been Professor and Head of the Department at the Government Dental College, Mumbai. I have also been Dean and Director of Dental Studies of the D. Y. Patil University. Somewhere in 1965, I suddenly found I was losing my voice and I developed a very bad cough. I was coughing almost every second. I just couldn't sleep or lie down. I had to spend nights sitting up just like this. Then I got myself examined, because a dry cough like that can be scary! They found that I had a lump in my throat – the size of a golf ball!

Every time I lay down I could not breathe properly, neither could I talk. The lump was so big that it interfered with my speech. I have been in practice since 1957, thought from 1961, I practiced as specialized orthodontist. When this happened in 1965, it meant the end of my professional life. Because every parent who brings their child for treatment wants to ask me questions and I just wasn't able to answer them. The very fact that I am talking to you is a miracle of Baba.

I was brought up in a scientific environment; most of my relatives were doctors, scientists, professionals, lawyers, some of them leading lawyers in the city of Mumbai. The background in which I brought up had taught me that anything to do with any Baba or any person like that was a crutch. That was the bane of India. This was my thinking.

In 1964 somebody gave me a picture of Baba and some vibhuti. I was ill then. This was six months prior to my meeting Baba. I respectfully turned it down and said, “I don't know who he is”. In 1965, I read Prof. Kasturi's book

“Sathyam Shivam Sundaram” and I read it with a lot of interest. In fact, I read it through the whole night. I was thinking I was really grasping the stories.

‘Baba is Calling You’

I said to myself, ‘maybe I should meet Baba, maybe that miracle can happen to me.’ Then I heard that He was in Mumbai. And I was walking down the Hanging Gardens in Malabar Hills, when a young boy came and told me, “Baba is calling you.”

I said, “Who, Baba?” Just before that I must tell you six months ago when somebody gave me the picture of Baba, I had said to myself, “Who is this man with the red dress and fuzzy hair?”

So when this boy said to me, “You know that Baba with that big hair and red dress.”

I said, “Yes, I know Him.” The he told me, He says to you, “Come to me.” I went there and it was in the house of Mr. P. K. Savant. This was around 12 o'clock in the afternoon. And it was a Ministers House, so police were there.

I had no knowledge of Baba or His routine. Baba had already given *darshan* and retired there. Police stopped me from going. I said, ‘Baba has called me.’ They said “Who?” I turned around and said, ‘this boy...’ I turned around and looked, there was no boy!

I told the policeman, “Please let me go inside.” The police looked at me and said, “You look like an cultured man, why are you doing this? Everybody wants to go inside.”

Somehow I wanted to stay. Half an hour passed and some policemen came to me and said, “You look like an educated person, why are you waiting here? Baba will not come out now. You go to Gwalior garden *darshan* at 4 o'clock. Baba is not going to come here just now, before 4 p.m.”

Still I waited. It was May, very, very hot. And it used to be very hot in Mumbai. I waited, somehow or other. About at quarter to 2, I decided that I will wait till 2 p.m. If Bhagavan Baba doesn't come out, then I will go back home.

It was too hot then and I stayed in the sun for almost two hours, and I wasn't keeping well. About 5 minutes to 2 p.m, Baba came out of the window on the first floor. He looked directly at me and said, “Come.” Now, the policemen's back was to the window and I was there across the road. I rushed. Around me there were two other ladies. I thought they were widows because they had white sarees on. They also came. They also saw Baba. I didn't know whom Baba called – me or them? But I went.

The policemen again told me, “What is this nonsense?” I said, “Baba really called me, from the window.” But Baba was no more there. I looked around.

Again no one! But Swami came downstairs to the ground floor. Then of course the policemen let me inside!

The ground floor was on a level, slightly higher than the floor of the compound wall. And I stood there, when I saw Him for the first time, I was not crying. But then tears coming down my eyes, just flowing. I was embarrassed. There were those ladies who followed with me inside and in front of these women, I am crying or what? It was actually a flow of water, like a river. Swami was standing and looking at me sweetly. Tears fell at His feet. I felt very comfortable with Him. He was at the verandah, at a height of 3-4 feet, and I was on the downstairs.

And then He takes a look at me, talks to me and says "*Kal Ma ko Leke Aana Maa ka thabeeyath teek nahi hai*. [Get your mother and come tomorrow. Her health is not good]." My Mother has not been well, being a chronic asthmatic. So I said, "OK."

"Tomorrow 9 o'clock, please come," he said again. I said, "Swami nobody is allowing me to come." He, then, spoke to someone and they gave me permission for two people - myself and my mother. I went home and Mother was very happy. She was spiritually very involved all the time. So if Swami had called me, he had called 200 other people too. And it was a huge gathering of 200 other people all in stages of sickness.

"He is My boy" - Swami

I distinctly remember one girl of 11 or 12, moaning away, because she is supposed to have a tumour in her head. We were all sitting down. When Swami came out in a room and He called us inside, like in the interview room, I had no knowledge of all this. I thought it would be like a doctor's room. I was called in fourth and I went with my mother.

Swami stood there and He talked to my mother and said, "You have got asthma. You have difficulty in breathing." Anyone looking at Mummy could tell she had asthma. She had the asthmatic build, gasp for breath and everything else. But she wasn't interested about herself at all.

So she said, "Swami, What about him?" Now look, I was looking normal. The throat wasn't showing anything. But He said, "I know Ma. *Upar Lump hai*. (yes, there is a lump on the top). Negative, Positive thoughts. Operation *kare, na kare?* (whether to do operation or not?)"

So mother asked Him the million dollar question: "Does he have cancer or not?"

With great authority Baba said "Cancer? He cancer? He is not your son, He is my boy. He has only come through you. No Cancer. He cannot have cancer."

Then Swami waved his hand and materialized a lot of ash in mother's hand. She said, "What should I do?" We have never seen anything like this sacred

ash before. He said, "*Kha Jao*." ("Eat!") She gulped all of it. He took me aside and said, "Do not worry. You go and pray, in 3 days you will be alright."

I was very spiritual that way. I used to believe in prayers and divinity a lot, except that I could not believe in any human being divine.

GV: When you say you pray a lot, you mean you prayed in the Parsi way?

KM: Yes, according to the faith I was brought up. I had a thing about going to the fire temple. I used to go 3-4 times a week even as a school boy. This was my nature. When I say prayer, I didn't really know any formal language nor the Avestan language, and I didn't like to pray in a language which I didn't know. I used to just go to the temple and communicate.

He said go on praying. Then He dismissed us. We went away. I went home and realized all this time coming from Swami and reaching home, for 30 minutes, I had not coughed. I suddenly became all right. My cough stopped, I could sleep. I thought psychology or hypnosis was at work. Two-three days later, Swami left Mumbai.

I didn't show myself to a doctor. At this stage I must tell you that some of the leading cancer specialists had all seen me and it was documented that they should get this lump out. "It will interfere with your breathing." "We don't know if it is cancer." "We can tell that only after the biopsy." "It is getting bigger." "You must get it out."

I didn't show myself to any doctor after Swami left. Six months passed, I was completely cured, symptoms had all disappeared. I had no physical checkup, no authenticity whether that tumor was there or not. Approximately six months later, I had a severe coughing bout. I spat blood. I was very scared. I went to the ENT surgeon, who is still alive at the age of 90 plus. I said, "Dr Heeru, Please see me."

He said, "You are very tense, I can't examine you. Have you had anything since the morning?" "No, I just woke up and came here. I haven't even had a cup of tea." After that he administered me anesthesia, a small induction, and then said, "Tell me what has happened? This is beautiful. There is nothing there, there is no tumor. How did you get it removed? What did you do? Who did you show to?"

Then I told him the whole story. He listened to this very intently and said, "Yes, I have heard cures about him. You are very lucky. I have seen cures like this. Go, you are a very blessed man!"

So, that was my authenticity.

A Change Occurs Both Inside and Out

GV: At that point you believed it was a sort of psychosomatic phenomena, how did you change your view? How did the full faith and confidence come to you?

KM: I am glad you asked me this. That same evening I saw Baba, I went to the temple after I went to Baba. I prayed to Zoroaster, said, "Show me a sign? Is this really someone who saved me or is it a fluke? I want to see a sign." And then in the evening, I went to His *darshan* meeting in Gwalior Palace. It was a huge gathering and from where I sitting Swami was looking like a tiny speck and I was hoping that He would come towards me. But I was almost at the last row and in a place where Swami would normally not come. And Swami came almost half way into the crowd and then He turned back towards the podium. But suddenly He turned. And made a beeline towards me. There was a rock there towards the end of the ground and I was sitting on the rock. He came very near me, put His hand on my shoulder and said, "Don't push too hard." I did not know what that meant but I took it as a sign. I said, "Why among the entire huge crowd He asked me?" All the other people started asking me, "Does he know you? Do you know him?" I said, "It was my first time." Whatever that incident meant, I took it as a sign!

From then on, many things happened. My wife was pregnant with my first child, nobody in the family knew about it, except her mother and my mother. And with only three months into the family way, she wasn't showing. I went to Puttaparthi. Sometimes He used to call doctors (1965-66) and speak to us. Swami used to ask few questions. I normally listen. He looked at me and asked, "*Aapko kuch bona hai? Kuch poochna hai?* (Do you want to ask or say something?)"

I said, "Nothing". But I must tell you, my wife had developed a funny problem of spitting. Every second she used to spit and that used to drive her crazy. She had tremendous salivation and it used to flow. So suddenly I remembered about my wife and said, "My wife..."

Swami cut me immediately and said, "Malum hai, Sir, Garbh" (I know, Sir, she is pregnant) Mind you, she was 700 miles away. He said, "Do not worry, August 22, you will have a son." I didn't ask Him anything. Then He said something else. "*Chiranjeevi* - Long Life!"

Then all the doctors went away. I went home and my wife said, "I want to tell you something. I am not spitting, salivating." I asked her went did it stop and I traced out that exactly at the moment I talked to Swami, she stopped.

To cut a long story short, I got a son. Swami did materialize a fruit during that conversation. It was a dry date. "A few hours before your wife goes for the hospital, you make her eat that fruit," He had said. We religiously did that for her and on August 22, just as Baba had told, my son was born.

GV: Amazing!

KM: I went to visit my son in the hospital on the 3rd day and my son's bilirubin had shot up to 10-11. If bilirubin shoots up, it can cause the brain to be damaged. They were taking the blood from the skull of the infant and seeing the count. My wife almost fainted watching this. She didn't know what was wrong and in her mind she said, "They are taking blood from the skull". It upset her but at the same time she was strong. The bilirubin sometimes went up to 10-13, but she said, "Don't worry. Swami told you *Chiranjeevi* (Long life). He will live." When Swami had said *Chiranjeevi*, I had thought it was a kind of casual blessing. Now I knew the significance. So we kept the confidence and he recovered. They found that in Parsis, the G6PD blood deficiency is common. He was born with the blood deficiency. This incident almost strengthened our faith quite a bit.

My wife was no way near Swami and she was 700 miles away, no one knew that she was pregnant. We did not discuss this with anyone. But He said everything. I wasn't even thinking about her pregnancy during that interview.

GV: Your narration is so fascinating, I have to ask you for more.

Life-Giving Sai

KM: I have seen so many things now, being with Swami for 40 years. I saw a person, a Sindhi gentleman, who was a printer from Madras, being declared dead. Swami used to ask me to go and work in the general hospital in Puttaparthi whenever I used to come here. One night, Dr Bhaskar Rao from Andhra Pradesh and myself were sleeping, as part of our duty near the bed of a patient. This person was almost declared dead. The whole family was called from Madras (now Chennai). At about 12 o'clock in the night, Dr. Bhaskar Rao wakes me and says, "Did you smell something very fragrant?" [Incidentally, this incident has been written about in Sanathana Sarathi, in the late 1960s.]

Dr. Bhaskar Rao woke me up. It was a very strong fragrance of *vibhuti* - it was very fascinating. This was the man almost dead! But nothing happened, we just got the smell. The next morning we went for our bath. And when we returned - it must be about 6 o'clock in the morning - we saw this man sitting up on the bed and singing *Raghupathi Raghava Raja Ram!* I almost fainted. It was so funny, it was so fascinating. This man who is almost dead, singing *Raghupathi Raghava Raja Ram!*

The Divine Blesses The Dutiful

Now, to tell you another interesting tale, my mother had absolute devotion to Baba. For her, Baba was 'the thing'. Nothing was in between her and Baba. One day while I was talking with her, she stood up and turned to go to the kitchen. I saw a big red blob on her backside. It was blood. I said, "What is this?" "I have been bleeding often," she said. I got very upset. "You don't even tell me, how would I know you are bleeding from your rectum?" We found out that she had cancer of the rectum. She told me, "Go and tell Swami". So I went to Baba. I went to Whitefield but Baba was in Kodaikanal. I

said, "OK, I will stay here for a while and then go back". But Mr. Ramabrahman, the caretaker of Whitefield ashram, told me, there was a phone call from Swami. "Dr. Mistry is there, tell him not to go, I will come in the evening" – that was the message from Him. So I stood by. When He came, I told Swami about mother's cancer. Swami then looked at me directly in the eye and said, "What doctor, should people live forever?" I, then, realized that it was His way of saying she was going to die.

Then I said, "Swami, as a son, I would request you that she should have a peaceful death." "Peaceful death *mangtha hai?* *Jao Milega*," [You want for her a peaceful death? Go, you will get that] He said, as if it was something He was giving out.

You should know how to talk to Bhagavan Baba. We ask him what we think we need. I just asked for a peaceful death. I should have asked for a peaceful whole life towards the end. The last week of her death was extremely peaceful, but not before that. She was neither here nor there. She wouldn't allow anyone to touch her, except me. She kept on saying, "My Prince," and asked me all funny things. She asked, "Without a dog, can a man enter the kingdom of heaven?" I told her the vedic story of how the king and the dog were refused entry. It was completely out of blue. She used to sing, say some hymns and things like that, which completely befuddled us. She had no knowledge. She was talking in tongues, which was totally new to us and completely new to her as an individual. I remember during her last moments, I was standing at the foot of her feet. She was lying there, raised her hands and then waived as if she was bidding goodbye and then closed her eyes. She had a peaceful death.

I told later to Swami about her end. I said that Mother was talking in all kinds of languages and her end was very peaceful. Swami took it as a matter of course. But let me tell you, Swami had visited Bombay during her illness. She was admitted in the Parsi General Hospital. And I was one of those persons Swami asked to be with Him whenever He came to Bombay (now Mumbai). There were a few others like Inamdar and Satheesh, and Swami used to allow us to be in His room. We did everything - draw His water, take out His clothes, serve Him food, etc. all things an attender would do. We were on duty and I was staying in Dharmakshetra (Swami's residence in Mumbai) itself, full 24 hours. I didn't go anywhere.

Other people used to ask me, "What about your practice?" But I used to feel very happy doing this and He used to allow me to do this. Now, one night - it was a Friday, I remember at 8 o'clock - mother was very ill and she was in the hospital. A call came from my father that the doctor says she is very serious and may not live through the night. So I asked my father, "Is she asking for me?" He said, "No. She is not conscious at all." I said, "If she is not asking for me father, do you feel that I should be there with you, because I am on duty." Swami retired at 8 pm. I cannot leave without Swami's permission. I don't feel like leaving, I haven't spoken to Baba and I can't knock on the door now. I wouldn't do that.

My sister came on the phone and she said, "What, nonsense?" I got a firing from her. I said, "Fine, give the phone back to father."

I asked Father, "Do you need me there?" He said, "No!" So I decided I will stay at Dharmakeshtra and pray for her. If she was asking for me, then it would be something else. Her doctor, who was a leading surgeon of Mumbai, too came on the phone and said, "Keki, I don't think she will make it through the night. It is up to you, it is your mother. Folks are asking me to talk to you." I said, "Ok". But then, this is the stand I took – I will stay at Baba's residence.

Swami was not there and I could not leave without His permission - particularly when she was not asking for me. Next morning at 7, Swami opened His door and I went inside. Swami sat down and was looking at some paper. I said, "Swami there was a call. Mother is not very well, can I have your permission to go?"

A Special Visit with Swami

Now, this was Saturday morning. He said, "Wednesday I am visiting Savant's house and your mother is in the hospital close by. Let us go together to visit her." She lived four days. I took it as a sign that I should not go. My family had a reaction, not my father. By that time, she recovered consciousness. Mother said, "No, let him be with Baba."

On Wednesday, Swami went to the Hospital – the Parsi General Hospital - to see her with me. Normally, I used to travel in the car with Him wherever He went. I would sit in the front and Sri Indulal Shah would sit next to Swami at the back. So, I went with Him.

When mother saw Swami in the hospital, she looked at Swami and asked,

"What is the matter with you? You, coming to see this old lady? Thousands of people are waiting for your *darshan* and you are wasting your time here."

Swami then knocked me and said, "See, this is called *bhakthi* (devotion)". Swami was showing me what true devotion is!

She said, "You left all the thousands of people for *darshan* and you have come to see old lady." At the same time, she was very conscious of herself as a host. "Please seat yourself," she said and then took some coconut water. Swami said, "I am not the patient" and asked her lie down immediately. She had been operated upon - *Colostomy* was done – and Swami created and applied *vibhuti* on her. He talked to her for 10-15 minutes.

Now imagine this. Doctor said, "Come immediately, she will not live through the night." But Swami said, "We will see her on Wednesday." My mother came home from the hospital and lived for another one and half years after that. She died in our home.

GV: You seem to have a fund of astonishing stories.

KM: This is only a tip of the iceberg!

GV: We would like to learn about more of the iceberg. Please tell us more stories.

...To be continued in the next issue of H2H.

SAI WORLD NEWS

NOTEWORTHY EHV WORKSHOPS IN ABU DHABI, U.A.E

“Education is for life and not for mere living
A flashing reminder for every human being

So peep at the precincts of value education
And apply its lessons at life’s every station

‘EDUCARE’ is that holistic education for all
It is a must to learn from early per divine call

Good character is the reward of this education
So be it the syllabi at every school in a nation.”

A Modern Desert City

Abu Dhabi (Arabic: literally "Father of Gazelle") is the eponymous capital of the largest of the seven emirates which constitute the South-West Asian nation of United Arab Emirates. Located in the North Central region of the country, this city lies on a T-shaped island jutting into the Persian Gulf from the Central Western Coast. More than 80% of its 1.8 million population (according to 2006 census) is made of expatriates.

Abu Dhabi is one of the most modern cities in the world. With headquarters of most of the emirates oil operating companies as well as other national embassies based here, this city is, truly, the center of government and business life in the UAE. The architecture of its modern buildings and skyscrapers is the finest in the Middle East. Located in the oil-rich and strategic Persian Gulf region, the majority of the inhabitants of Abu Dhabi are expatriate workers and professionals from India, Pakistan, Egypt, Bangladesh, Philippines, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere. The native-born populations are Arabic-speaking, Gulf Arabs who are part of a clan-based society, while the rest speak English, Urdu or Persian.

It is interesting that though a desert strip, Abu Dhabi city is known in the region for its greenery. With numerous parks and gardens, unspoiled beaches, the tranquility of the desert, rugged mountain scenery and lush green oases – all in a clean and safe environment – Abu Dhabi is an amazing Arabian adventure, mystifying and lively. But what is more heartening in the recent times is the blossoming of a unique bloom: the *Sathya Sai Educare Programme*.

EHV in Abu Dhabi - An Educational Inspiration

In Abu Dhabi, we find Education in Human Values classes imparting value instruction and inspiration to more than 150 children by scores of Sai teachers every week at eight centers; training workshops for Bal Vikas teachers; seminars on 'Dynamic Parenting' for school teachers and Parent's Contact Programs held in the Sai centers regularly; a two-day discussion on Human Values in 2000 attracting 350 teachers besides leading local luminaries like H.E. .Sheikh Nahyan Bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research and Chancellor of the Higher Colleges of Technology, and Indian ambassador HE. K. C. Singh.

In addition to the above, later in the same year, Dr Art-ong Jumsai Na Ayudhya, Director of Institute of Sathya Sai Education, Thailand, was invited to address the Zayed University officials and teaching staff; two volumes of 'Divine Stories' books containing over 200 stories on Human Values published in 2003 were accepted to be published by the Books and Publications Trust, Prasanthi Nilayam, since 2005, and the generation of a masive amount of material on Human Value education and its aids, the Human Values programme in operation in this prosperous cosmopolitan city by dedicated Sai volunteers in the decade old Abu Dhabi Sai Centre is an inspiration for the rest of the world.

The First EHV Workshop

One of the greatest moments of jubilation for the 350 odd members of the Sai centre (which swells to 800 on special occasions) was in 15 March, 2006 when Bhagavan Baba accepted their prayer, submitted in a letter, to extend the Education in Human Values programme to English Medium schools in the city and gave His blessings to go ahead with the proposal. This added benediction put the whole programme in a new gear, and the motivated devotees, on June 2, 2006 organized the First Workshop on Education in Human Values in the Auditorium of the Indian Embassy.

Hon. Guest Prof. Dr. Reynold Macpherson, Chancellor, Abu Dhabi University, lit the lamp to inaugurate the conference, and as the flame flickered, EHV students of the Sai Organization sang human values songs in melody and harmony. Later, the chairman of the Abu Dhabi Sai Centre gave the welcome address.

This was followed by informative and revealing lectures by EHV trainers from the Sathya Sai Organisation of Oman. Topics on which they elaborated included 'Why Value Education?'; 'Role of Teachers and Inculcation of Human Values'; 'The Psychological Impact of SSEHV on Children'; 'Value Inculcation across Curriculum and Co-curriculum', etc

Teaching and Leading by Example

An eminent child psychologist from Dubai, Dr. Onita Nakra, PhD, who is also a Sai devotee, gave an enlightening lecture on 'The Teacher as Counselor' with solutions for common child and adolescent problems in schools. She added that Sathya Sai EHV is conveyed primarily by **example and experiential exercises**, rather than academic study, and explained that everyday events occurring in the classroom can be used directly to illustrate the values.

Teaching fraternity from 15 schools and one University participated in the conference and at the end of the day-long conference, one of the participant teachers said,

"Many behavioral problems in society are mirrored in schools, through bullying, drug abuse, theft and vandalism, which all make a teacher's work more difficult and less satisfying. In addressing this need, the SSEHV Programme, in conjunction with inspirational teachers, seeks to improve the moral quality of young people leaving school and make teaching more satisfying to those in the profession".

That the whole event was a fulfilling experience for every teacher and educator who participated, was evident from their countenance and encouraging words during and at the end of the conference.

"Thank you to all of you who have put in so much time and effort to make the Sathya Sai EHV training so educative and inspiring," said a teacher from an Indian school. "The training modules were organized very well to depict one of the five values and the way it has been presented using the five teaching components was excellent. This programme has made a positive impact on my personal and family life".

"EHV... the future of the world."

Thoroughly impressed with the lecturers as well as the excellent presentation of a skit 'Five Elements' depicting how value erosion leads to deterioration of life, staged by the EHV children during the lunch recess, all the 200 odd participants which included many **Head teachers and Principals** lauded the SSEHV Programme and placed their requests for PowerPoint EHV lectures, training, follow-up and on-going support revolving around human values teaching tools in their schools. They expressed their viewpoint:

"Sathya Sai Education in Human Values Programme is a much needed tool that provides a structured, well thought out methodology for providing value based education. These works are much needed, are to be held more frequently taking local issues for deliberations".

But the icing on the cake was the message of Prof. Reynold Macperson, Chancellor Abu Dhabi University, Abu Dhabi, who said, "Education in Human values is the ultimate in education and the future of the world. I

will readily give my auditorium in the newly coming up campus to hold EHV seminars in the future and also I will involve all my teaching faculty and students.”

An Eagerly Awaited Follow-up

That was the overwhelming impact the Conference had. In fact, the request for holding another workshop was so compelling from teachers and principals that the Sai devotees organized a follow-up workshop within four months. And this time, the Conference was held in the Y auditorium of the Zayed University, Abu Dhabi campus on September 22, 2006. Again more than 200 turned up for the workshop but there were now three colleges and two universities apart from ten English medium schools. Clearly the word had spread and it was being increasingly admired by all concerned with education.

“I thoroughly enjoyed attending the Sathya Sai EHV workshop. The Programme gave me an excellent insight into human values which are intrinsic in every one of us, and which I am now trying to put into practice every day. The methods of teaching that were used were especially efficient as they were geared for people from all walks of life. How can I admit my children?” This was what a Muslim lecturer from the Higher College of Technology enquired.

Another salient facet of this workshop was the invitation given to administrative staff of educational institutions and also to parents. The SSEHV Programme is most successful only when the whole environment of a student is comprised of value-conscious adults, and to help achieve that, increasing the value-awareness of the entire school staff and parents is paramount. Among the audience members were Muslims, Christians of various nationalities and Arab nationals belonging to United Arab Emirates.

“I appreciate the strong stand SSEHV takes on society's values. A child can switch on a television and see images that imply greed and selfishness is good, that physical attractiveness is more important than inner worth, and that only youth matters. I am sure children who go through the SSEHV programme will help to transform society, walking the path of values into a better world,” said Reema Menon, a counselor.

After inaugurating the Conference, HE Mr. C. M. Bhandari, Indian Ambassador to UAE, said, “While commending the service activities carried by Sai Organisation and the transformation being brought by Bhagavan’s teachings, Education in Human Values is one important tool for all educational institutions to adopt to produce useful, serviceable and productive human resources. He urged that parents and teachers have the responsibility to be good role models for their children, which means that they must practice what they want them to follow. If parents and teachers set the right example, the students will automatically blossom into models of excellence and become good citizens”.

In the 8-hour long workshop, two speakers from Dubai Centre and four from Abu Dhabi, dealt on pertinent issues like Traditional and Family values; Importance of Human values in education and society; Human values- the heart of dynamic parenting; Integration of Human values through curricular and extra curricular activities; and Value Education at the university level.

At the end of the conference, the head teacher of a school said, "This was a very positive and revitalizing course. SSEHV states the teacher's role is the most important and that we can really make a difference to the pupil and to society. As teachers for such long periods this subject of human values has been a powerful, enriching and uplifting message. Participating in the course as an experienced teacher, I have felt renewed and as a part of a community that shares my vision for education."

Rejuvenated Enthusiasm for Teachers - A Quiet Revolution for Students

It was the same feeling of rejuvenated enthusiasm that echoed from every teacher who went through the course. A teacher from ARS said, "Teachers who have tried EHV program have found that it does work, particularly with the aid of the Silent Sitting exercise. Silent sitting helps to quiet children's minds, make them less hyperactive, improve memory and concentration, and overall, improve receptivity and standards in all areas of learning."

A silent revolution of ideal learning was on. "Children will internalize the messages in the songs and quotations, and develop in their understanding. The stories offer opportunities for improving communication skills through discussion, group work and role-play," said a Christian teacher.

In the midst of all these 'paradigm shifts' in the minds of teachers on teaching methodology, there were lighter moments too when EHV students sang value songs and the Chancellor of Abu Dhabi University, Professor Macperson, gave away certificates to EHV students and felicitated them. The chancellor also made an enthralling Power Point presentation on 'Implementing Education in Human Values at University level'. He said that EHV prepared students for the opportunities, responsibilities and experience of a meaningful adult life.

Love's Success

With requests pouring in to the Sai Organisation to conduct similar programs as frequently as possible, the Sai volunteers knew by the Lord's grace, the programme was a success. What really touched every participant's heart was the sincerity and the genuineness of purpose with which the whole event was conducted. It was great teamwork and you could see love everywhere, as a school supervisor from OWES said, *"My overall assessment is that it is an excellent Programme. It is very well structured, can easily be integrated into any school's curriculum and help to improve its ethics through the five values i.e. Truth, Love, Peace, Right Conduct and Non-Violence. The love generated amongst the participants was very profound"*.

Ultimately it was love which did the trick and that is truly the 'heart and soul' of EHV. As Swami says, "A person with no love in his heart is no man at all." And the lead that the devotees of Abu Dhabi have taken in spreading this message of love through the principles and practices of Education in Human Values is commendable. We, at Heart2Heart, wish that with time the desert-city of Abu Dhabi transforms itself into a divine-city pulsating with love and compassion.

- Heart2Heart Team

LOVE OF SCIENCE AND SIGNS OF LOVE

- A Revealing International Conference in the Department of Physics, SSSIHL

Each year, the month of November draws several thousand devotees from around the globe and all corners of India to Prasanthi Nilayam. The week of November 23, 2006 which marked Bhagawan's 81st birthday celebrations, was no different. Devotees thronged Prasanthi Nilayam to witness the 25th annual convocation of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning (SSSIHL) - a deemed university, and the inauguration of Sri Sathya Sai International Centre for Sports - an indoor stadium of international standards, and a momentous gift from Bhagawan to His students. The indoor stadium was built in a record four months time and inaugurated on November 22, 2006 by His Excellency President of India, Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam. Offering his reverential pranams at the Lotus Feet of Bhagawan, the President praised the value-based education offered at Bhagawan's institutions saying it combines spirituality with social responsibility. The president also emphasized the importance of emerging technologies to the students and faculty of SSSIHL and said,

"From the university website, I found that SSSIHL is attracting faculty members from many parts of the world. This resource can definitely be utilized for providing courses to the students in the emerging field of "Convergence of Technologies". The information technology and communication technology have already converged leading to Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Information Technology combined with bio-technology has led to bio-informatics. Now, Nano-technology is knocking at our doors. It is the field of the future that will replace microelectronics and many fields with tremendous application potential in the areas of medicine, electronics and material science."

As Divinely ordained, and on the heels of President's exigency to open doors to nanotechnology, the department of physics at the SSSIHL hosted an international workshop at Prashanti Nilayam on "*Science and Applications of Nanostructured Materials*" from 29 November to 1st December, 2006. Because of its multidisciplinary nature, the workshop attracted participants researching in diverse fields ranging from physics, chemistry, biosciences, engineering, to business and management studies. Twenty invited speakers and about fifty participants from various Indian institutions participated in this workshop.

Most of them were making their first visit to Prasanthi Nilayam, and understandably their curiosity was two-fold – scientific, and about Prasanthi Nilayam itself. As one of the invited speakers from Cambridge University wrote in his email ahead of the event - "I have heard a lot about Baba's work. Being invited (to Prasanthi Nilayam) gives me an opportunity to see it for myself." The students and faculty of the Brindavan campus (Bangalore) also participated via teleconferencing from the Sri Sathya Sai Multimedia Learning Center inaugurated by Bhagawan earlier in August, 2006.

Every student of the SSSIHL is trained in the practice of "*Atithi devo bhava*" (Revere the Guest as God) and this often involves learning lessons from Bhagavan directly. Events in Prasanthi Nilayam where first-time visitors are introduced to Bhagavan's philosophy, message and work present both opportunities and challenges to the students of Bhagavan. These events are verily "practical laboratories" where the student is put to test. The three-day international workshop on nanostructured materials was one such event. Besides being curious knowledge-seekers, the students played the role of hosts, organizers and caretakers during this event. They organized themselves into small groups to efficiently attend to the needs of each visitor and more importantly, introduce them to Prasanthi Nilayam and help them discover on their own about Bhagavan's work, philosophy and message.

As a part of this workshop, the visitors were also shown an hour long video on Bhagavan's mission and work, courtesy of Prasanthi Digital Studio. This began their introduction to *His Work*. At their own convenience the visitors visited the Super Specialty Hospital to absorb the magnitude of *His Work*. To many of the visitors, especially those from overseas, the presence of a university of this nature in a rural setting was a miracle. One of the professors of Indian origin, presently residing in the United States, said, "To establish a university in this country, in a rural setting is a wonder. Usually students from rural areas move to the universities located in cities. Here, it is just the other way round and this trend is more than a miracle." And what impressed them most was the import of a value-based education system. It was a stark contrast to what they usually see in most academic circles.

The workshop not only enhanced education for the students but also served as a platform for the participants to forge international collaborative research in nanoscience and nanotechnology. Progress and current issues related to the synthesis and properties of nanostructured materials were discussed, in particular, the curative effect of trace amounts of copper present in the human body was thoroughly analyzed.

For example, copper is an essential element of an enzyme necessary for the production of cartilage lining in human bones. This scientific fact justified the ancient practice of Indian sages who habitually drank water stored overnight in copper vessels. After further deliberation on the curative effects of silver and gold particles, it was unanimously concluded that Bhagavan's *vibuthi* (sacred ash) which has the most therapeutic benefits for the human body, could work in ways much subtler than these and remain beyond the understanding of our limited minds.

For some of the participants, the impact of their interaction with the students came shortly after the event ended. One of the invited speakers called a member of the faculty at the SSSIHL and said he was moved by the warmth and love of the students he interacted with. Recalling later the last few moments when the students requested him to visit again in near future, he said, "I was touched by the genuineness of feeling. It is customary to say a few these words when a guest leaves. I hear this everywhere. But I felt that

here the words were suffused with love." Another professor from the United States wrote, "It will be a pleasure if some of Bhagavan's students chose to work with me in the future. Their sincerity is remarkable."

His love flowed through the young minds. *Love of science* brought the participants to the workshop which provided them an opportunity to worship at the shrine of science. Those who came to share their *love of science* were indeed touched by the *signs of love*. It is indeed amazing what the touch of divine love can do to man, mind and matter.

GET INSPIRED

The Wooden Bowl

A frail old man went to live with his son, daughter-in-law, and a four-year old grandson. The old man's hands trembled, his eyesight was blurred, and his step faltered. The family ate together nightly at the dinner table. But the elderly grandfather's shaky hands and failing sight made eating rather difficult. Peas rolled off his spoon onto the floor. When he grasped the glass often milk spilled on the tablecloth. The son and daughter-in-law became irritated with the mess. "We must do something about grandfather," said the son. "I've had enough of his spilled milk, noisy eating, and food on the floor."

So the husband and wife set a small table in the corner. There, grandfather ate alone while the rest of the family enjoyed dinner at the dinner table. Since grandfather had broken a dish or two, his food was served in a wooden bowl. Sometimes when the family glanced in grandfather's direction, he had a tear in his eye as he ate alone. Still, the only words the couple had for him were sharp admonitions when he dropped a fork or spilled food. The four-year-old watched it all in silence.

One evening before supper, the father noticed his son playing with wood scraps on the floor. He asked the child sweetly, "What are you making?" Just as sweetly, the boy responded, "Oh, I am making a little bowl for you and mama to eat your food from when I grow up." The four-year-old smiled and went back to work. The words so struck the parents that they were speechless. Then tears started to stream down their cheeks. Though no word was spoken, both knew what must be done. That evening the husband took grandfather's hand and gently led him back to the family table.

For the remainder of his days he ate every meal with the family. And for some reason, neither husband nor wife seemed to care any longer when a fork was dropped, milk spilled, or the tablecloth soiled. Children are remarkably perceptive. Their eyes ever observe, their ears ever listen, and their minds ever process the messages they absorb. If they see us patiently provide a happy home atmosphere for family members, they will imitate that attitude for the rest of their lives. The wise parent realizes that every day building blocks are being laid for the child's future.

Let us all be wise builders and role models. Take care of yourself...and those you love... today, and everyday!

THE SMALL HOUSE

A long, long, time ago there was a farmer named Mr. Cohen who lived with his wife and two daughters. The house was very small but very clean. Mr. Cohen did not have much land, but he was able to keep a few cows, sheep, a goat or two, some chickens, a donkey and a horse. The donkey and horse were used to plough the land. His wife kept a small vegetable garden. Mr. Cohen was not rich, but the family always made enough money from selling milk, cheese, eggs, and vegetables.

You would think that Mr. Cohen was content. However, Mr. Cohen's neighbour was very rich. He lived in a great big house with his wife and children and maids and servants. He had horses, but these horses were not working horses. They were only for riding. Mrs. Cohen was jealous of the neighbour's large house, of the maids and servants, and of the horses that were only used for riding. She nagged Mr. Cohen constantly. She wanted a larger house, she wanted maids and servants, she wanted fine horses which were only used for riding. With all this nagging, Mr. Cohen had no peace of mind.

Mr. Cohen knew he couldn't afford a larger house, but he was tired of his wife's constant nagging. He decided to consult the Rabbi - the learned man of his village. "I am going to speak to our Rabbi," Mr. Cohen told his wife. "Maybe he can come up with a way for us to get a larger house."

So one evening after work he went up the hill to the Rabbi's home. "Good evening Rabbi," said Mr. Cohen.

"Good evening, Mr. Cohen" said the Rabbi. "Can I help you with something?"

"Yes," said Mr. Cohen. "Rabbi, as you know, we are not rich. We have a small house, which we are able to take care of with the small amount of money we receive from selling our crops, eggs and milk. But my wife is jealous of our neighbour's wealth - of their larger house, maids, servants and riding horses. Day in and day out she nags me to get a larger house. But we can't afford a larger house. Rabbi, do you have any suggestions for what I can do to please her?"

The Rabbi thought for a few moments. Then he looked at Mr. Cohen and said, "You have chickens, do you not?"

"Yes, Rabbi, we have chickens," said Mr. Cohen. "Well, then, bring them into your house this evening."

Mr. Cohen just stared at the Rabbi. Then he thought to himself, "The Rabbi is the town's most learned man. If the Rabbi thinks that bringing the chickens into the house will help, then I will not question him."

So Mr. Cohen returned home and told his wife what the Rabbi said. Then he brought the chickens into the house. The chickens proceeded to squawk and

complain, and flew around the house. Chicken feathers were everywhere! And in the morning, there were chickens everywhere, scrambling this way and that. Mrs. Cohen complained, "I don't understand how bringing the chickens into the house will get us a bigger house. Maybe you misunderstood the Rabbi. Go back and ask him again."

So that evening, Mr. Cohen went to the Rabbi's house. "Good evening, Rabbi," he said.

"Good evening, Mr. Cohen," said the Rabbi. "Can I help you with something?"

"Yes, Rabbi," said Mr. Cohen. "Yesterday I asked you to suggest a way I could please my wife's wish for a bigger house and you told me to bring the chickens into the house. Now we have chicken feathers everywhere and my wife is not happy. Rabbi, can you help me please?"

The Rabbi thought for a moment. Then he said, "You have goats, don't you?"

"Yes, Rabbi" we have goats."

"Well then, bring them into the house tonight," Mr. Cohen stared at the Rabbi for a minute, then proceeded down the hill to his home and brought the goats into his house.

And the goats started whining, which made the chickens complain. Then the goats started to chew on everything, making a real mess. Needless to say, Mrs. Cohen was not happy which made Mr. Cohen even more unhappy.

"Go back to the Rabbi," Mrs. Cohen said, "and ask him again. I am sure that you are misunderstanding what he is saying."

So the next evening Mr. Cohen went up the hill to see the Rabbi.

The Rabbi told him to bring the cows into his house! And the next night he brought in the sheep, and the next night the donkey, and the next night the horse!

The house was so crowded that the family couldn't find a place to sit or sleep. It was so noisy that they couldn't hear themselves think! And you can imagine how it smelled. Mrs. Cohen was beside herself, and Mr. Cohen didn't know what to do. The Rabbi had never given them bad advice before!

So Mr. Cohen went up the hill back to the Rabbi. "Rabbi," he said. "Far be it for me to question a man of your knowledge and learning, but it has become impossible to live in our house. And the noise - Rabbi - you can't imagine how noisy it is! Please Rabbi, you have got to help me!"

The Rabbi thought for a moment. Then he said, "Tonight take the horse out and put him back in the field. "Thank you Rabbi," said Mr. Cohen. And he bounded down the hill and let the horse go back outside. But of course the

house was still crowded. So the following night Mr. Cohen went back up the hill to the Rabbi, and again asked for his help. And the Rabbi told him to take the donkey out of the house. The next night the Rabbi told him to take out the sheep, and the next night, the cows, and the next night the goat, and finally the next night the chickens.

After the chickens were gone, Mrs. Cohen looked around at her large house. "How peaceful it is," she said, "and how nice and roomy." And she proceeded to clean up her large, peaceful house and never again complained to her husband about her life!

Swami says, "Contentment is the most precious treasure" and "He who has greatest satisfaction in life is the richest man". Let us be grateful to the Lord for what we are bestowed with and make the most of it rather than compare ourselves with others and feel ever miserable. When we trust Him completely, He will provide us with the right things at the right time.

PACKED BLESSINGS

A young man was getting ready to graduate college. For many months he had admired a beautiful sports car in a dealer's showroom, and knowing his father could well afford it, he told him that was all he wanted.

As Graduation Day approached, the young man awaited signs that his father had purchased the car. Finally, on the morning of his graduation his father called him into his private study. His father told him how proud he was to have such a fine son, and told him how much he loved him. He handed his son a beautiful wrapped gift box.

Curious, but somewhat disappointed the young man opened the box and found a lovely, leather-bound Bible. Angrily, he raised his voice at his father and said, "With all your money you give me a Bible?" and stormed out of the house, leaving the holy book.

Many years passed and the young man was very successful in business. He had a beautiful home and wonderful family, but realized his father was very old, and thought perhaps he should go to him. He had not seen him since that graduation day. Before he could make arrangements, he received a telegram telling him his father had passed away, and willed all of his possessions to his son. He needed to come home immediately and take care of things. When he arrived at his father's house, sudden sadness and regret filled his heart.

He began to search his father's important papers and saw the still new Bible, just as he had left it years ago. With tears, he opened the Bible and began to turn the pages. As he read those words, a car key dropped from an envelope taped behind the Bible.

It had a tag with the dealer's name, the same dealer who had the sports car he had desired. On the tag was the date of his graduation, and the words...*'paid in full.'*

How many times do we miss God's blessings because they are not packaged as we expected? Let us not forget that whether we realize it or not, know it or not, feel it or not, God is there for us at every moment, doing all that is necessary for growth and well being. Let us be open to Him. Let us be in tune with Him and live in the conscious feeling that 'He is there for us doing all that is good for us at every moment'.

TEST YOUR SPIRITUAL QUOTIENT

MULTI-FAITH QUIZ

1. With which every day situation does Bhagavan illustrate the sadhaka's journey of: knowing God, *Jnaathum*; then seeing God, *Dhrashtum*; and ultimately merging in God, *Praveshtum*?
 - a. Procuring some mangos in the market.
 - b. Completing an exam at school.
 - c. Finding a lost coin on the road.
 - d. Jumping over some hurdles in a race.

2. In Islam, what is the significance of the Cave of Hira? It was there that -
 - a. Prophet Muhammad hid from his enemies.
 - b. Prophet Muhammad received the Koran.
 - c. the first Koran was written.
 - d. the stones to make the first mosque were found.

3. Who gave the name Krishna to the divine child?
 - a. Lord Krishna's foster mother, Yashoda.
 - b. Lord Krishna's real mother, Devaki.
 - c. Sage Garga
 - d. Lord Krishna's father, Vasudeva.

4. If you have read Prasanthi Diary this month you will be aware that devotees from many countries celebrated Chinese New Year, on the 23rd- 24th February in Prasanthi Nilayam. What was the theme and moral message for the celebrations?
 - a. 'Leave the fruits to God'
 - b. 'Filial Piety'
 - c. 'Faith in adversity'
 - d. 'Love and tolerance'

5. In Sikhism, what is a *sakhi*?
 - a. The place where the holy book of the Guru Granth Sahib is kept.
 - b. The lead singer of the kirtans or bhajans.
 - c. A traditional story.
 - d. The free food kitchen operated by Sikh temples.

6. 27th March is Rama Navami, the birthday of Lord Rama. With just one more day remaining to Lord Rama's fourteen years of exile, He stopped His aerial chariot in sight of the holy city of Ayodhya and was greeted by Guha, chief of the tribesmen. What did Lord Rama do before reaching Ayodhya?

- a. Lord Rama Himself went in disguise to inspect the city and check on his brother, Bharatha's welfare.
- b. Lord Rama sent Hanuman in disguise to his brother Bharatha, to inform him of His arrival.
- c. Lord Rama organised a yagna for the successful completion of the fourteen years of exile.
- d. Lord Rama went to visit sage Agastya and paid His respects to him.

7. Which religion celebrates *Noruz* as their new year festival, which begins on 22nd March this year?

- a. Islam
- b. Shinto
- c. Zoroastrianism
- d. Jainism

8. One day, a devotee of Shirdi Baba cooked a sumptuous feast as an offering to her Lord. But while she was preparing the fare, a dog came and begged for food. Rather irritated she chased the dog away and carried on with her cooking. Later, she approached Shirdi Baba and asked Him to accept her offering. What happened next?

- a. Shirdi Baba refused to accept the food.
- b. The dog returned and sat at Shirdi Baba's Feet.
- c. The lady dropped the plate before she could give it to Shirdi Baba.
- d. Shirdi Baba threw the food away.

9. 31st March is the birthday of Mahavira, the last of the Jain teachers, who lived 2,500 years ago. The followers of Jainism are called Jaina – what does this word mean?

- a. Disciple
- b. Sadhaka
- c. Servant
- d. Conqueror

10. With which analogy does Bhagavan illustrate the Mahahvakya, or profound saying, of *Tat Twam Asi*, which means 'I Am That'?

- a. The river and the ocean.
- b. Milk is one colour, compared to the many colours of the different cows.
- c. The seed and the tree.
- d. The honey bee and the flowers.

ANSWERS:

1 A: Procuring some mangoes in the market.

Swami explains that knowing God can be compared to first finding out that there are sweet mangoes in the market. Seeing God is akin to the joy of buying them and having them in our hands. Lastly, mergence is analogous to tasting and enjoying the fruits.

2 B: It was there that Prophet Muhammad received the Koran.

The Cave of Hira lies about three miles away from Mecca, and is found on the Mount of Hira. It was there that Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) used to pray in solitude and where the first revelation of the Koran was made to him by the angel Gabriel. At first, Prophet Muhammad was fearful of the angel who showed him the verses of the Koran; moreover he protested that he was illiterate. After a short time, he found that he was given the ability to read and thereafter the revelation of the Koran continued with the angel Gabriel revealing the Koran to Muhammad.

3 D: Sage Garga

Bhagavan informs us about this event as follows:

Garga was highly respected by both the Pandavas and the Kauravas. He was the Kula Guru (family preceptor) of Nanda and the Yadavas. He was a great scholar replete with knowledge and wisdom. He went to the house of Nanda and Yashoda for the naming ceremony of the two babies. There are a few esoteric matters that are not widely known. Incarnations generally occur in three categories of Shukla (white), Aruna (orange) and Pita (yellow). But here was a baby who was black. Hence, Garga considered and found the name Krishna (black) as most appropriate. After the naming, Garga narrated several episodes that were to take place in the life of the child and, after staying on to experience and enjoy some of them, he departed.

Divine Discourse 11.08.2001

4 B: Filial Piety

During the Chinese New Year festival there were many human value sayings on display in the ashram which carried the words 'Filial Piety – the Cornerstone of Chinese Civilisation and Progress'. Another saying by the ancient Chinese sage, Confucius, who influenced countless Chinese people over many centuries is as follows: 'Behave in such a way that your father and mother have no concern about you, except for your health.'

5 C: A traditional story.

A *sakhi* refers to accounts of historical events in Sikhism. It is a tale usually from the era of the times of the Gurus which often have a moral lesson and highlight important Sikh principles. An example of a short *sakhi* is as follows:

Baba Amar Das served Sri Guru Angad Dev with utmost devotion and dedication. Besides fetching water from the River Beas for the Master's bath every day, he would serve in the free food canteen. Every year the Guru acknowledged his services by conferring upon him the robe of honor which the Great Guru wrapped around his head. Baba Amar Das was decorated

with the Siropi seven times. Seva is one of the main tenets of Sikhism, exemplified through the lives of Gurus.

6 B: Lord Rama sent Hanuman in disguise to Bharatha to inform him of His arrival.

Swami tells us about Hanuman's meeting with Bharatha in the following passage:

Hanuman was thrilled at the condition of Bharatha. His body had been very much reduced, he was worn down by anxiety. His hair had become matted. His eyes had become perennial streams of tears. He was repeating the name of Rama without intermission. Hanuman was full of joy at the sight of such a dedicated soul. The hairs of his body stood on end because of the ecstasy. His thoughts ran in several directions. But he remembered his mission and poured the nectarine news he had brought into the thirsty ears of Bharatha.

(Ramakatha Rasavahini – II p,271-272)

7 C: Zoroastrianism

Noruz is an ancient Zoroastrian festival going back thousands of years. It begins on the vernal equinox (when the day and night are of equal length) and the celebration lasts six days. The sixth day, Great Noruz, is remembered as the birthday as Prophet Zoroaster. People celebrate it by spring cleaning their houses, wearing new clothes and by jumping over bonfires as a purificatory rite. This year the celebration of prophet Zoroaster's birth falls on 26TH March.

8 A: Shirdi Baba refused to accept the food.

Shirdi Baba told her that the dog that came to her begging for food had been Him in another form. Therefore, having been refused the food one time He did not want to accept it now. Thus, Shirdi Baba taught a valuable lesson on the oneness of all beings and how we must show universal compassion to all of God's creation.

9 D: Conqueror

Jaina is derived from the Sanskrit *Jina* which means conqueror and refers to the overcoming of our inner foes and advancement on the spiritual path towards nirvana.

10 C: The seed and the tree

Bhagavan describes how the seed looks at the tree from which it came and declares 'I am that'. Just as the different parts of the tree such as the branches, leaves, flowers, seeds, trunk and roots are all born from the single tree so the entire universe is one though it seems to contain an infinitude of parts.

QUIZ ON H2H

1. In our series packed full of *Unforgettable Moments With Sai*, H2H readers could savour the divine memories of Mr Chidambaram Krishnan which went back to the 1960's. In our May 2006 issue we carried his recollection of driving Swami from Puttaparthi to Chennai when he unfortunately suffered a double blow of getting lost and running out of petrol. As the car ground to a halt Swami got out and told him off! What happened next?

- a. Swami disappeared into thin air – only to reappear in Madras.
- b. Swami created more petrol in the tank.
- c. A car pulled over driven by the Raja of Venkatagiri.
- d. Mr Chidambaram Krishnan and Bhagavan had to spend the night in a nearby temple.

2. H2H regularly features the mammoth drinking water projects that Bhagavan has executed. Totalling all the schemes, such as Anantapur, Chennai, Godavari, Medak and Mehboobnagar how many people have been benefited from the projects?

- a. One million people
- b. Three million people
- c. Seven million people
- d. Ten million people

3. In our February 2007 cover story we brought you the amazing tale of Sanathana Sarathi - its divine creation and sustenance by the Lord Himself. In the inaugural issue Bhagavan gave His first message to the magazine, praising Sanathana Sarathi as: "at the head of the spiritual cohorts". How did Bhagavan describe these spiritual cohorts?

- a. The five human values.
- b. All those upholding Dharma.
- c. The Vedas, the Upanishads and scriptures.
- d. The monks and Rishis.

4. In our January 2006 issue we told you of a moving account of service to a poor and neglected paralyzed lady; how Swami's seva dal restored her home and galvanized the villagers to help her too. At one point the district held a bhajan at the lady's house and while all were immersed in the divine vibrations a miracle happened. What was this miracle?

- a. The paralysed lady stood up and started to dance.
- b. Amrit and Vibhuti started to come from all the pictures of Sai.
- c. A bus crashed into the house – but none were hurt.
- d. A ring materialized mysteriously on the lady's finger.

5. On Swami's 65th birthday He declared that there would be a Super Specialty Hospital in Puttaparthi, built and operational in one year. What was noteworthy about the last few days before the Hospital's opening?

- a. Many patients lined up outside the gates.
- b. The necessary doctors to perform the surgeries appeared in the nick of time.
- c. None could understand how the remaining work on the Hospital was able to be completed in time.
- d. Despite heavy rains in the surrounding areas, Puttaparthi received no rain fall to disrupt the building work.

ANSWERS

1 B: Swami created more petrol in the tank.
Let us turn to the account in H2H, May 2006:

When I got out of the car, Swami also got out. He then said to me, "Open the tank." I said in reply, "Swami, the fuel gauge shows the tank is empty. I can of course open the tank, but it is not easy to see inside." To that Swami said, "Does not matter; you just open the tank; I want to see for Myself." I removed the cap and opened the tank, after which Swami peered inside. His hands were on the car and He was gently tapping even as He looked deep inside. He then said, "No petrol inside, and also no prospects for getting petrol now, right?" Meekly I responded, "That's how it looks, Swami." Swami then said, "Doesn't matter. You get in and just turn on the switch and look at the meter again. Maybe you did not read the gauge properly."

*I obeyed and got into the car and turned on the switch. I saw the meter and it showed the tank was full. I was puzzled and said, "Swami, I think something is wrong with this meter." Swami rejected my analysis and said, "How can that be? This is a new car. I think the meter is right. You just turn the key and see what happens." I did that, and wonder of wonders, the car started! **Meanwhile, Swami started laughing, and that was when I realized that by tapping the tank from the outside, in a flash He had actually filled the tank.***

2 D: Ten million people

Let us look at how Prof Venkataraman puts this in our December 2005 issue on *The Sri Sathya Sai Godavari Drinking Water Project*:

*If one counts all the people benefited by Sai Drinking Water Projects [including the seven million or so in Chennai], then in the last one decade, **Swami has provided drinking water to about ten million people!***

*To give you an idea of what this means, please note that the population of New Zealand is about 3.8 million, the population of Belgium is about 10.3 million, the population of Hungary is about 9.8 million, and the population of Sweden is about 8.9 million. Just think about it: Has any private charitable trust anywhere in the world done anything like this? And please note, **every single project done by swami is given away free to the state concerned.***

*The State may get it free but Swami's Central Trust has spent **hundreds of millions of dollars**.*

3 C: The Vedas, the Upanishads and scriptures.
The full text of the message is:

From this day, our Sanathana Sarathi is on the march, at the head of the spiritual cohorts – the Vedas, the Upanishads and scriptures – to subdue the evil ego brood – injustice, anarchy, falsehood and license. “May this ‘Charioteer’ fight for world prosperity and, by making the drum of victory sound and resound, spread joy among all mankind.

4 A: The paralysed lady stood up and started to dance.
Let us read the account from an eye witness:

At that golden moment something momentous, something miraculous, something totally unexpected, began to happen. That 50 year old lady who had no sensation in her hands and legs and had been confined to her bed for the past 20 years, suddenly, without the help of anybody or without anyone being conscious of it, raised herself up to sit on the bed. Slowly, she put her feet down and stood up! She moved her hands as well. She moved towards the place where bhajans were being sung in front of Bhagavan's picture. The whole village was immersed in the bhajans and did not know of the miracle that was taking place inside the house. All at once, they saw her coming to the front of the house unaided and raising her hands in homage to the visible Lord and beginning to dance in ecstasy.

5 C: None could understand how the remaining work on the Hospital was able to be completed in time.

Let us read about this amazing tale from the director of the Hospital himself, Dr. Safaya, from the May 1, 2004 issue:

It seems like a miracle. The hospital was to be inaugurated on 22nd. Two days before that date, I gave up. I fell down on my bed at 12 O' clock in the night, telling myself, “I cannot go any further, because the hospital will not be ready to be inaugurated on the due date. Surgical operations have to be done. The conditions are not sterile. Scientifically we are not ready.” I told my wife that I had failed my Master and started weeping, which I never did, at least in presence of my wife. She got alarmed and encouraged me saying, “Swami is a God. He will do something, don't worry. Bhagavan's Sankalpa has to be realised and it will be for sure.” Lo and behold, so it was; everything got completed miraculously just before the inauguration. Thus on 22nd November, 1991, when the inauguration was scheduled, exactly at 9 o' clock, precisely as HE had predicted, the surgeon's knife did touch the skin of the patient That is what exactly happened.

HEALING TOUCH

‘GIFT OF LIFE’ TO THE ‘GIFT OF GOD’

Gift of Life...

In the Viveka chudamani by Sri Adi Shankaracharya the opening verse begins with the phrase “*Jantunam narajanama durlabham...*” Of all forms of life, it is most difficult to attain that of a human being....The word Durlabha generally connotes rare or difficult to attain. ‘Health is wealth’ is an aphorism that we are taught right from kindergarten but how many of us honestly take it seriously? The onslaught of globalization and the opening up of economic frontiers have revved up the speed of life to levels where parents have to be taught by counselors how to bring up children and couples meet consultants to know how to be man and wife. In this age of frenzied rat racing...it does not come as a surprise that good health has been reduced to the level of a commodity and has been commercialized. With money (read income) becoming the deciding factor, quality medical care is beyond the reach of common man. It becomes *Durlabha* – difficult to attain. To add insult to the injury were one to be born into the cold cruel world with a malady...life definitely becomes bitter and every dawn brings with it another day of sorrow and suffering.

Gift of God...

Monirul Haque Khan and Ashrafun Nahem was a happily married couple blessed with a daughter. Their joy increased manifold when they were blessed with a son. Since he was a gift from god they valued tremendously, they named him Durlabh Khan. Life seemed to be on track for the family of six that included the couple, their two children and the grand parents. But pleasure is an interval between two pains. For this family, the shock came when they found that their little boy Durlabh was born with a heart problem. They learnt about the illness when the child was one year old.

It did strike an ironic note that the child named ‘rare gift of God’ suffered from a disease while being blessed with a human birth that is ‘difficult to attain’. That is why philosophers who don’t question the ways of the Lord say – ‘Inscrutable are the ways of God.’

They Came from Bangladesh...

Hailing from the Rajbari district of Bangladesh, the family was from the lower income group. Mohammad Khan ran a small private business while his wife, Nahem was a gifted seamstress. She would beautifully embroider sarees which her husband would arrange to be sold at Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh. Despite sustained domestic and international efforts to improve economic and demographic prospects, Bangladesh remains an underdeveloped and overpopulated nation. The country has made impressive progress in human development by focusing on increasing literacy, achieving gender parity in schooling, and reducing population growth.

Jute was once the economic engine of the country. But the use of polypropylene dealt a fatal blow to that industry. Although two-thirds of

Bangladeshis are farmers, more than three quarters of Bangladesh's export earnings come from the garment industry which began attracting foreign investors in the 1980s due to cheap labour and low conversion cost. The industry now employs more than three million workers, 90% of whom are women. A large part of foreign currency earnings also comes from the remittances sent by expatriates living in other countries.

They Struggled...

The couple had none of the advantages of the select few but could still manage a decent standard of living. But with a sick child in the family it was painful. Considering the fact that the entire district had hospitals barely equipped to handle tertiary care they were looking at a bleak future. At the onset of the symptoms they approached local doctors who directed them to higher centres in the capital city Dhaka. There too they found no solution. When the child was four years old they traveled to Calcutta in search of medical help. With the kind of economic background they came from, they found it really difficult to stretch their resources to cover expenses.

God Reached Out...

It is when we least expect, that God makes his presence felt. In Calcutta, they were informed of a hospital in South India that offered free medical care. They could hardly believe their ears but when the news was confirmed by many others, they made bold to come down to Bangalore – their resources were already at dangerously low levels when they came to the SSSIHMS at Whitefield. To their utmost surprise they found that what they had heard at Calcutta was absolutely true and indeed all the facilities at the SSSIHMS were provided to patients free of cost.

The Problem and the Solution...

Their son was admitted for cardiac surgery. The clinical tests were performed and the final diagnosis was that Durlabh was suffering from Tetralogy of Fallot - a condition where the heart has four anomalies in one. A Ventricular Septal Defect (a hole in the lower chambers of the heart), Pulmonary Stenosis (obstructed pulmonary artery that channels impure blood to the lungs), Overriding Aorta (the aorta that supplies pure blood to the rest of the body is right on top of the ventricular septal defect) and right ventricular hypertrophy (the walls of the right lower chamber of the heart begin to thicken because of increased blood pressure caused by the above three conditions. Also the patient looks blue in color at times because the blood is not properly oxygenated).

The surgical procedure followed to palliate this problem is called Intra Cardiac Repair. Durlabh underwent the surgery and emerged without any complications. Everything went smoothly and with the grace of the God to whom the parents diligently prayed. His pallor changed from the unnatural blue to a rich pink.

Gratitude Finds Words – and Action!

After surgery when he was recovering in the ward his mother who was his constant companion said, **“He is a very intelligent boy, he grasps things very quickly and thanks to Baba we will see him achieve his**

ambitions. He is a cheerful boy and very brave. Of course he was angry at why he had to suffer while his classmates were normal. But when he came here and saw all this loving service... the mother's eyes misted and she bowed her head in gratitude to "Baba". "He knows that he is more special than all his friends to be blessed by Baba in this hospital. I am eternally grateful to Baba for having given my son a new life." The son was far more in command of himself. Firm of voice and eye; **"I want to come back here as a sevak"**, said Durlabh. His voice steady with conviction. **"I loved the food and the way people treated me here. I want to share it with others."** He loves games and music and finds relaxation in music. And like his parents, he does not forget to thank God every moment of his existence for the gift of life. His cheerful and optimistic disposition was really encouraging. He now looks forward to whatever challenges life has to offer with a new vigor. Both mother and son asked for Swami's picture and vibhuti.

Life is a Gift of God...

This is just one example that goes to prove that love, service and devotion are not limited to the privileged few. Just as every saint has a past and every sinner a future. The ones that suffer and emerge from the flames with a smile on their lips are the ones that are dear to God. Gold is purified only when it passes through flames. Likewise all of us in different ways are refined by our maker. But to those that come to the home of their 'Father', their 'Baba'...the lyrics of a song in praise of Sai Baba of Shirdi come to mind...

*Tere Ghar pe jo bhi aaya
Oh mere sai baba
Khushyon se tune sabki
Hain jholi bhari hain!!!*

Oh my Lord Sai,
You have filled everyone
who comes to Your doorstep
with ultimate happiness.

- Heart2Heart Team

YOUR SAY

Reader's Feedback To The February Issue

Responses to the Cover Story "Sanathana Sarathi – Recreating A Prashanti in Every Home"

Sai Ram,

We read with interest all articles in the current issue of the web journal. Of special mention, I would talk of the article related to the history of Sanathana Sarathi. It was amazing to read about Sri. Kasturi and his team going from Puttaparthi and back to make the magazine ready for mailing to the readers. Once again we are indebted to H2H team for bringing Bhagavan to our doorstep.

Regards, Kartik

Thanks for the wonderful article and beautiful pictures of Swami and the history of Sanathana Sarathi. It's a great informative and interesting publication.

Sairam, Karur Krishnan

Responses to the February Issue Articles

Sai Ram!

Again I have been touched by a new article "Rays of Virtue and Grace" by Mataji Indra Devi, who was my Yoga teacher after she moved from the States to Argentina till her death. Thanks very much for bringing us the beautiful stories.

Nora, Argentina

Sairam,

The quizzes which have been in the Radio Sai website are very good and I know some new things from that wonderful spiritual quiz. Please post some more questions and update that quiz once in a week or twice in a month.

Thanking You, Shanmukha Rao.

[Dear Shanmukha, we now have two quizzes every month, one on multi-faith and the other on H2H – H2H Team]

Sai Ram,

When I first looked at this article I thought, "Oh no, this physics stuff is way over my head." But Prof. Venkataraman's mix of storytelling and science is a delight to read, and I look forward to more by him. As always, I love your H2H daily quotes and links.

Sai Love, Christiane, Santa Barbara, Calif.

Sairam,

I recently sent you writing about Sai Baba as a teacher. I just finished reading the excellent article about Bolivia and I remembered my favourite Baba-teacher story.

I was isolated twenty-five years ago from Baba devotees. Yet I expected Vibhuti to be sent to me whenever I ran out. I prayed and I received packets somehow. However, at the beginning of one semester no Vibhuti arrived. The first day of classes I needed to fix a student enrolment problem at the Registrar's Office. The Office was crowded. A student waved her computer punch card. Her name was, "Vibhuti." I wanted tell her that although enrolled in another class, she belonged in my class, but I didn't. Instead I found her in my class later that day. The ash arrived that week, but I learned sacred Vibhuti was my students and my duty as their teacher. Baba was teaching as always.

Mary Hoffman

General

Sairam,

I think I haven't adequately expressed how thankful and grateful I am to the Radio Sai, H2H and Sai Inspires services. Only last year I came to know about Radio Sai and since then it has been a joy to sit at the computer. It is like having *satsang* everyday. It was wonderful to listen to all the interviews in the 'listen again' section- the good old days of Mrs. Geetha Ram with Swami, the enlightening talks of Dr. Sandweiss, Dr. Hislop, Prof. Venkataraman, the students of Swami who went to the US and the like. I benefited immensely from the Bhagavad Gita chants as I had to take a balavikas class for the students of Sri Sathya Sai school near my town.

The Sai Inspires service is our daily tonic and the h2h articles and stories are a grand feast. Spiritually undernourished as we were all these years, with the advent of Radio Sai we are bubbling with spiritual energy or Sai energy. Wonder why no one thought of all this years before?

My heartfelt thanks to all your team members. With the blessings of Bhagavan may you live long and continue your priceless service to humanity.

Sairam, with love and regards, Latha, TN , India.

Responses to Sai Inspires

Dear H2H,

I have just read your most inspiring article about the Sai movement in Guatemala and it really gladdens my soul to know how Baba is spreading his love throughout the world. I am Vasigaren Pather of South Africa and am truly inspired and look forward to the daily messages that you send out from H2H. The daily inspirations from Swami really have the power to uplift our souls and guide us along the spiritual path to Him. I would like to see every school in the world practice the EHV programme of education that Swami has instituted. I believe that it is the only way that we will begin to realise that we are all one. My wish is to come to Puttaparthi and meet Swami or at least be in his presence this year. Please keep up the good work that you are all doing. Sai Ram.

Responses to the Sunday Special Article Feb 11th 2007

Sairam,

Thank you for the discourse. I appreciate what your team has aimed to do, and it is clearly accepted. However, we the Sai devotees around the world are not affected by these comments and remarks of the ignorant and less informed. It is our task as the Sai organization to reinforce continuously the teachings of Bhagavan until we understand at a deeper and deeper level, until nothing (no remarks, comments, insults or stones) thrown at Swami or ourselves can harm us. My request to all Sai devotees: Draw from the Master, look deeply and yearn for a deeper and better understanding and Swami will teach you how to become stronger, to the point that people will start seeing the force within the different nations, the force that is the Sai Force within ourselves. Ignore all comments, lead a life full of bliss and tranquility and love. Hate none for his lack of knowledge, as he has not been fortunate to know Swami in this lifetime!

Sairam, Maistry, Nerven

Dear Sir,

What a soothing and convincing article dispelling the clouds of hostile criticism against Swami. Thanks for the timely messages of this kind given by H2H.
Sai Ram, Badri

Responses to the Sunday Special Article Jan 21st 2007 - "Mastering The Art Of Living"

Sai Ram, dearest friends,

Thank you so much for that lovely - and very pictorial speech from the student. I enjoyed reading it very much, as it teaches a lot in the practical sense of the world on 'how to create our own happiness and success in daily

life', and also the colourful story of the father and son, teaching us all about the richness in our hearts and everything around us, but that we don't realize, sometimes...Lovely! Definitely a very illustrative and simply told story to remind us all how to really put into practice what Swami is teaching all along!

Thank you very much. I would love to read more...

Sincerely, Prema Ram

Sairam,

Thank you. Just as I sat and wondered about some things, the poems in this note of '-mastering the art of living' was so beautiful - If God in person came to spend some time with us too. Discipline in one's life is to do the things we do, knowing that God is watching us all day long and night too. This poem was an answer to my question.

Love and Gratitude, Srilatha

Dear H2H,

I find the talks and articles by Swami's students inspiring because they are living in the Lord's presence and coping with a demanding and very high standard of required behaviour and study. Their's is a practical application of Swami's teachings from which we can all learn. Not all of us can be at Swami's Feet for months at a time or receive His undivided attention over many evenings.

Jai Sai Ram, Stefania

Sai Ram Heart2Heart Team,

First, let me say you are doing such an excellent job with the production of the listeners' journal and the Sai Inspires emails. Second, I wanted to say I was quite struck and impressed by the student's article and enjoyed it very much.

I would look forward to other such articles in the future if you found it to be appropriate to add them on, either as Sai Inspires attachments or in the journal itself.

Thank you and Sai Ram, Ben

Sai Ram,

I just read the above titled article and I am so spellbound. I love it so much and I am aspiring to also master the art of living. Please continue to send us such beautiful articles. Thank you so much.

Regards, Tilaka

Sairam,

I read this article written by a Student of Swami. It was excellent. In fact I was not happy and was worried after I had some arguments with an individual in our housing society. I was unable to "let it go" and this was bothering me. After I read this article, I thought that it is sent by Swami just for me. Thanks a ton to that student who made it possible for me to "let go" a past event.

Jai Sairam, Varadharajan (kumar)

To the Heart 2 Heart team, Sairam!

I just thought I would drop this note back to the team who has been behind the daily awe-inspiring messages from Swami and thank them profusely. I was going through a phase in my life with a lot of questions and constant dialogue with Swami on why things happen the way they were happening with me. I was reading the Sai Inspires message daily to make sure I am on the path that Swami wants me on.

The issue on 21st January with the title "Mastering The Art Of Living" was an instant answer to so many of my questions. My sincere thanks to the student who put together these thoughts from Swami in a manner that convey the message so crisply.

I would also like to mention that the effort by the team to put together the messages is amazing and impacts the lives of so many who subscribe to it in a big way. I am a humble devotee of Swami based in Singapore and the messages make sure that we are in constant communion with Swami's message for our lives daily.

I thank you one and all!

Sairam, Niranjana Rao

Sairam,

The Chicagoland devotees were blessed yesterday, to hear a nectarine talk dripping with Swami's Love and Message given by our dear Sister Geetha Ram. The article "Mastering the Art of Living" by Swami's young student took off where she left off! It is exquisite in its rendering - hopefully we can take it to Heart and reflect and restore our mundane life to its pristine glory. Thank you from Chicago. I am sending this article to our SSE (Sai Spiritual Education) children and families. I Pray to Swami to inspire them as He has inspired me.

Sincerely, Sandhya Mirmira,
SSE Coordinator W Suburb Chicago Sai Center

Om Sai Ram!

The article is so inspiring...(I have to take time to reflect...) Swami's students are indeed Golden. And yes, I would very much like more such contributions from students of Swami's University. Thank you for all your efforts.

Om Sai Ram, Tina Hribar, Trifunovic, Slovenia