



HEART TO HEART



RADIO SAI LISTENER'S JOURNAL

The Enchanting Festival



COVER STORY

Dussera at Prasanthi Nilayam



PRANAMS AT THE LOTUS FEET

Journal

developed by
SGH Team, Prashanti Nilayam &
S N Informatics Private Limited, Bangalore



Mail us for Details: h2h@radiosai.org, enquiry@sninform.com

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Between You and Us

Dear Reader,

We in Radio Sai are simply overwhelmed by the response we have been receiving for our new venture. Your Ananda is our tonic, spurring us to do more, and still more!

It is kind of interesting. These days, the Media generally goes solidly for “*sensational news*”. As late Sri V.K.Narasimhan, veteran journalist and formerly Editor of Sanathana Sarathi often used to say: When dog bites man it is not news, but when man bites dog it is hot news! Reading some of the stuff that is printed one wonders whether people are even inventing stories of “man biting dog”!

Recently a highly respected newspaper in India, *The Hindu*, celebrated its 125th anniversary. It was started in late nineteenth century by half a dozen people with a capital of just one and three quarters of a rupee. With that money, one cannot even buy a loaf of bread, today. But way back, this was enough to print the first edition: a print run of 80 copies. Today, *The Hindu's* circulation is touching a million. Two principles have characterized this newspaper all along justice and fair play. But generally speaking, all that has been given the go by in most parts of the world, including by newspapers that once used to command respect. As in sports, money is responsible for this unwanted and unbecoming change. If you ask any Editor of today, he would say, “Look, righteousness is no longer readable.” In fact, Sri V.K.Narasimhan often used to play with the words “readable righteousness” and “making righteousness readable”.

Mercifully, we are not bothered by all that for the simple reason: we are not tied to money. Our job is not to generate money, achieve publicity and goals akin. All we seek to do is to spread Ananda. With Swami's blessings and guidance, that is easy and such an enjoyable pursuit too. So we are at it all the time, and do not bother about vacation, rest, and things like that. Swami often says, “Change of work is rest for Me!” His constant example is what drives the adrenalin in all of us.

The wonderful response we have been getting from all over is a clear signal that there is in fact a tremendous **hunger** for righteous news. It is proof enough that people **do** want to hear about good and noble things. To declare that people are no longer interested in that kind of stuff is sheer sham.

So thanks again and keep up the support, helping us to serve you better!

God bless; Jai Sai Ram.

SGH Team.

Recently in a BBC Radio Programme, there was the news that within a few months China was going to send a man into space. The broadcaster then contacted on the phone a leading official in China [rich radio stations can do such things!] and asked that official many questions about China's plans to send a man into space. In the process the broadcaster asked a question, a provocative one of course, because that is the way broadcasting is these days [except of course on Radio Sai!]. He said, "Sir, it is going to cost a lot of money to send a man into space. Is it really necessary when this is not going to be the first time? What will be gained from it, and why spend money on this venture when China needs to do so much for the rural poor? Why not spend this money on poverty alleviation?"



On the face of it, one cannot take exception to this question, except that the Western media persons do not ask such questions of their own politicians and planners. In this connection, I recall what late Prof. Sampath used to say about the First Gulf War. [For those of you who do not know, Prof. Sampath was the Third Vice Chancellor of Swami's University. But more important, he was a most lovable man, a great devotee of the Lord, most witty and ever full of humorous stories.]. Prof. Sampath often used to point out that with the money spent in that war fought in the early nineties, **THREE HUNDRED** Super Speciality Hospitals of the type founded by Bhagavan Baba in Puttaparthi could be set up.

Yes, today money is not only misused but also often used for atrocious purposes. Recently, there was an Arms Bazaar in London at which leading arms peddlers gathered to exhibit and sell their wares. On the one hand, there is a lot of hue and cry about weapons of mass destruction and on the other, the very same countries that cry hoarse on such matters put up an



exhibition enticing all and sundry, including people from the impoverished countries of Africa to shop for arms. I mean, will people buy arms and then go for a picnic? Arms promote conflict; conflict in turn leads to brutality, death, massacre,

and millions of innocent people suffering.

My intention is not to point an accusing finger at others. Rather, I would like to use this opening so that we do some introspection ourselves. All of us spend money. Some of it is for absolutely necessary purposes while at other times it is for pleasure and enjoyment. One cannot complain against having some fun occasionally. But, if the money spent on it can be set apart for something else, why not?

Here I am reminded of a touching incident that happened more than ten years ago. The Puttaparthi Super Speciality Hospital was just coming up, and in those days, Swami was deeply involved day in and day out on the Project. In the afternoons, after Darshan, Swami would be in the Interview Room, conferring with people involved in the Project. For students, this was very difficult to bear because earlier, Baba would spend so much time in the veranda, talking to them. But the boys understood the reason behind the change. And whatever they wanted to tell Swami, they now put it into letters, which Bhagavan received at Darshan time.

One afternoon, Swami came for Darshan, received letters from the public and the students, and then went into His room. A while later, the door opened and Swami came out holding a letter in His hand saying, "Who wrote this letter? Which boy wrote it?" The boy who had given the letter recognised it to be his. He was scared but slowly got up. Swami asked, "You wrote this letter?" Fearing the worst, the boy just nodded. Swami then said, "Come here." Legs shaking and body trembling, the boy went to Swami. Swami then said to the people on the veranda, "You know what this boy has written and done? He says, 'Swami, I am very anxious to do something for the Hospital Project. If I were a rich man, I could have written a cheque. If I were a contractor, I could have contributed building materials. If I were an engineer, I could have helped with the construction. If I were a doctor, I could have opted to serve here. I cannot do any of these things because I am still a student here. Yet I want to do something. So Bhagavan, out of Love for You, I decided to save money, money that I would otherwise have spent on soft drinks, snacks and various personal conveniences. For example, I now wash my clothes instead of giving it to the Dhobi [washerwoman]. This way, I have been able to save a hundred rupees. Please allow me to offer this with Love at Your Lotus Feet. If this money could get even a little brick for the Hospital, I would consider myself Blessed!'" After saying



all this, Swami held opened the envelope and held up a hundred rupee currency note for all to see. Bhagavan then slowly said, “For Me, this hundred rupee note is more valuable than the biggest of cheques”. Yes, that was the same God who [as Krishna] accepted puff rice, speaking!

So what is the point? The point is just that we gain so much more by giving to others than in giving to ourselves [in the form of pleasure that is]. One is not compelled to give to others. But it makes one's life so much better and sweeter.

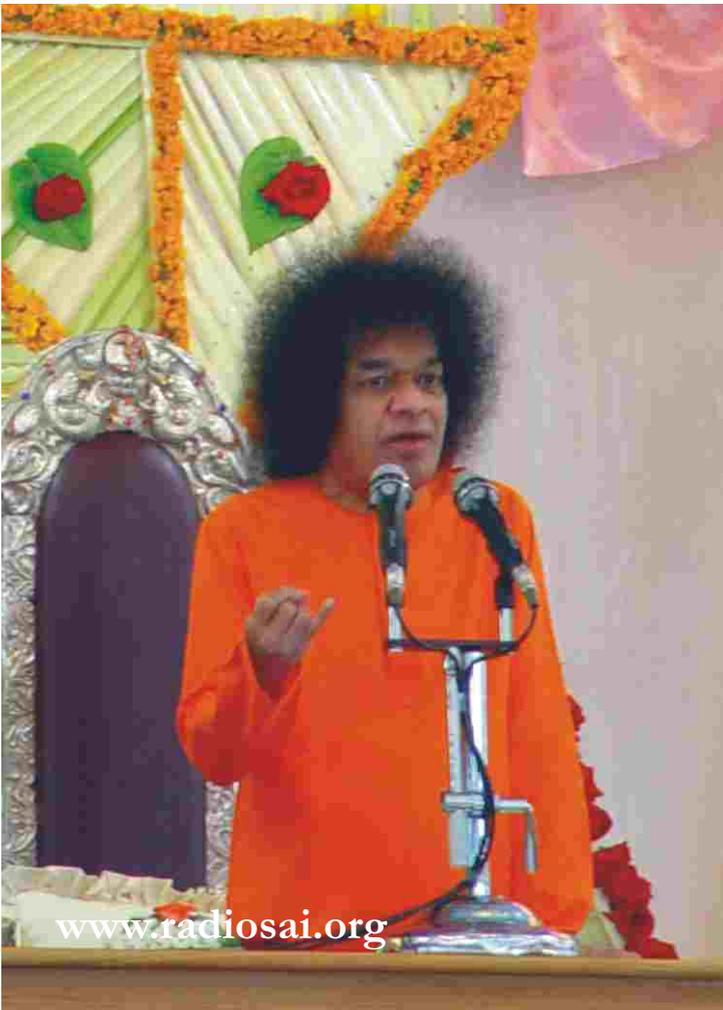
I shall end with another story that came out in one of my classes while we were discussing spiritual matters. Some months ago when it was a bit rainy and slightly cold here, one afternoon, as the boys were coming for Darshan, one boy noticed an old woman sitting near the wall of the Primary School and crying. He saw her dress was wet and that she was shivering. Without a second thought, this boy just quietly peeled off from the line, and ran back to his room in the hostel while the others marched to the Mandir. Once in his room, this boy picked up a thick bed-sheet of his, rolled it, packed it, and started walking back towards the Mandir. When he came to the old woman, he quickly opened the package and wrapped the sheet around the shivering woman. The old lady was taken aback. The boy then said, “Amma, don't worry. This is for you.” The lady could not speak. She looked into the eyes of the boy, with tears in her eyes. Tears they were but they were tears of joy and gratitude. For this boy, his day was made. He had come face to face with Love. With God.

Next time we want to have a ball, why don't we stop for a moment and think of some old woman somewhere, who could be helped with that money? Gandhi put it nicely and told Government officers, “When you want to spend money, think of the face of the poorest person you know and ask, 'Will this expenditure benefit that person?'” Remember a Bhajan that starts with a line about the serving the poor? Can you recall that Bhajan? If you do, write to us, and we shall announce the names of all who got it right! Write to h2h@radiosai.org. When you write, don't forget to write your full name, and the name of the place and the country from where you are writing.

Good luck!

----- Prof. G.VENKATARAMAN.

Being Near and Dear to GOD



Whatever a man sees in the world arouses fear in him. Detachment alone can free him from fear. Failing to grasp this profound truth, man is allowing his desires to multiply, without realising that desires promote attachment instead of detachment.

As long as man is attached to the body, he cannot get over the desire to possess the objects that attract him. A man afflicted with the acquisitive impulse can never get rid of worries. To overcome this attachment and possessiveness, ancient sages tailored their educational system so that it promoted self-control. Self-control also developed humility and thus, humility became the true index of right education. Control of the senses is absolutely essential for achieving humility, and education must promote such control.

Today's educational system is concerned mostly with imparting bookish knowledge, and students seek education only as a means for earning a living. This link between education and employment has to be severed, and education must instead be transformed into the process of acquiring True Wisdom.

In life, there are two aspects that have to be considered, rights and duties. Most people are concerned only with their rights and engage in struggles to secure them. Seldom do they recognise their responsibilities. This is true of all fields of human activity social, political, economic and even spiritual. Lack of self-control is responsible for all this.

Men should regard their senses as potential enemies and not allow senses to have their own way. They should be subject to one's control and direction. What is the easiest way to achieve this mastery? Only the spiritual path. If there is real faith and devotion in man, the senses would be powerless against him. It is the decline in faith and devotion that has led man to become a slave of the senses.

The prompting of intellectual reasoning should not be identified with the dictates of the Conscience. Rather, the directives should come from the Heart. When you dive deep into a problem and enquire whether what you do is in the interests of your friends and Society in general, your Conscience will give you the right answer

Man is made up of three constituents, the body, the Mind and the *Atma*. Man needs the body for performing actions. But, if the actions are done without using the discriminating power of the Mind, man would be behaving like an animal, which acts on impulse. Moreover, if the Mind, without relying on the eternal and ever pure *Atma*, follows the demands of the body and the senses, the actions would be demonic. Bereft of the influence of the *Atma*, the combination of the Mind and the body can lead to demonic qualities. However, when one is installed in the *Atmic* principle, transcending the body and the Mind, one attains the Divine.

Hence, sanctify all your words, thoughts and deeds. Make your Heart pure so that it becomes a worthy abode for the Divine.

EXCERPTS FROM A DISCOURSE BY
SRI SATHYA SAI BABA

Question: Swami, what is meant by *Jnana* or Spiritual Wisdom?

Jnana does not mean bookish knowledge! It has nothing to do with scholarship. To acquire *Jnana*, you do not have to master numerous books. Truly speaking, *Jnana* is attained when you investigate all your shortcomings and get rid of them totally. Spiritual Wisdom is NOT attained by stuffing the brain!

Question: How to give up the feeling of 'I' and 'Mine'?

A small example will make this clear. There is a rich man living in a mansion. For protection, he maintains a fierce dog. If you want to enter the mansion, there are only two ways open to you.

One method is for you to become friendly with the dog. This is the path of *Karma Yoga*. Or else, the rich man must come to gate and take you inside; if he does not come, the dog will not let you inside. This is *Bhakti Yoga*. These are the only two ways of getting rid of the feelings of 'I' and 'mine'. *Bhakti* is the best way of destroying ego, which is at the root of the feelings of 'I' and 'mine'.

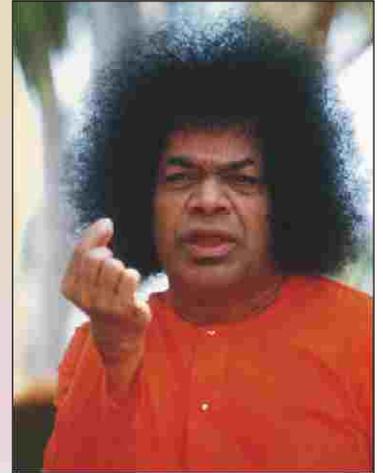
Question: Swami, it is said that we are responsible for our actions, and that we cannot escape its consequences. Under the circumstances, what benefit can *Bhakti* [devotion] confer?

After creating everything, God gave man complete freedom to do as he liked. But God has imposed a condition. You may do what you want and enjoy what you desire, but you cannot escape the consequences. You have to face the result. Therefore, you alone are responsible for what happens to you. The good and the bad that happen to you were brought about by you alone. You ask: "Why then should we have *Bhakti*?" There is an example that will provide the answer.

You have some land. You may grow onions on it or jasmine that depends entirely on your wish. But whatever it is, you must pay land tax to the Government. In the same way, you cannot escape the consequences of *Karma* or your actions. Here there is an important point. Your income tax is dependent on the amount you earn. But there are also tax exemptions. In the same manner, devotion, service, *Sadhana*, *Bhajans* etc., all fetch you

Some rebate from the consequences of your past actions.

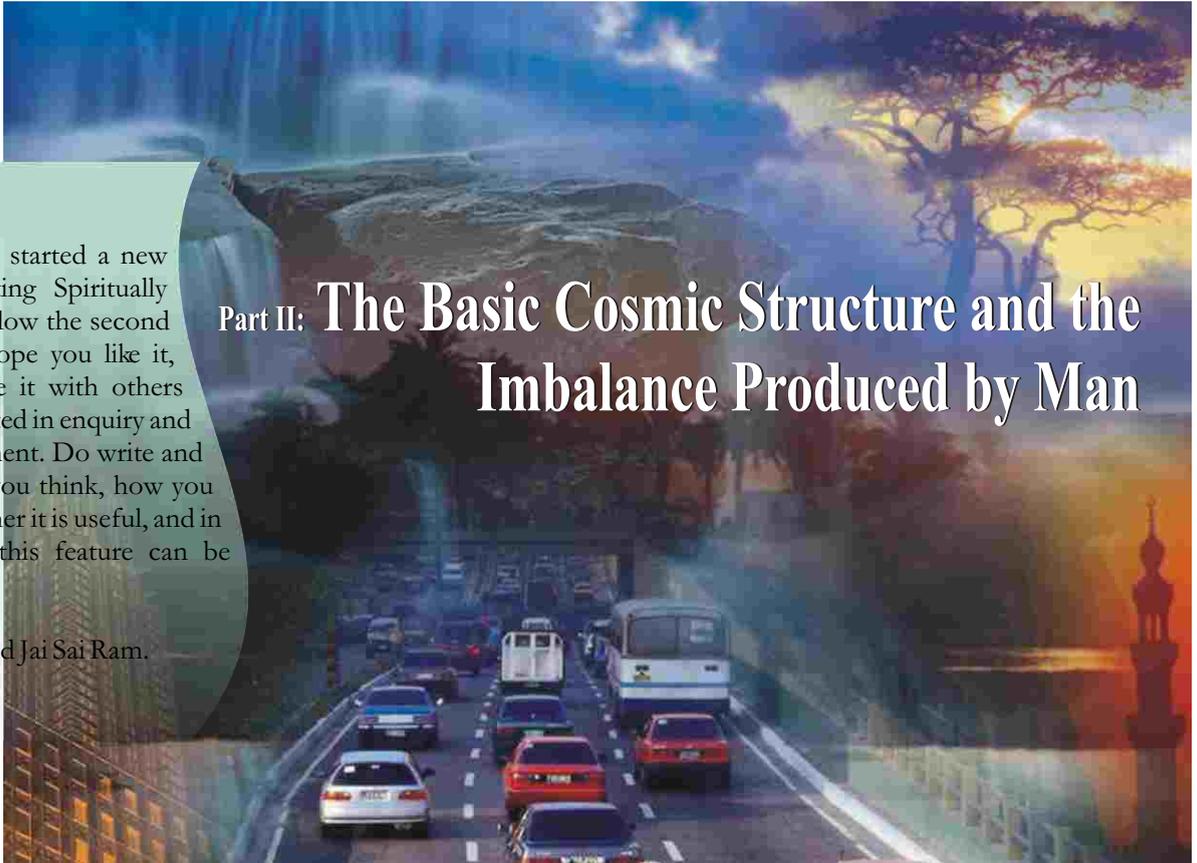
Question: Swami, some say God has no Form while others worship God with Form. Please explain what the difference is.



This is where many make mistakes. How can one even think of the Formless if there is no Form to start with? So, Form cannot be summarily dismissed. You have a form, don't you? Therefore, you must worship God with Form. If a fish were to worship God, it would think of God as a very big Fish. The same with a buffalo; it would think of God as a Super Buffalo. In the same manner, man must think of God in human Form. As a matter of fact, the worship of the Formless itself originated from the worship of God with Form. Without, Form, the Formless has no meaning. An example, you are here conversing in this room with Swami. Here you are dealing with the actual Form. Later when you go to your room, you recall this conversation and that mental recall does not involve actual physical Forms. There are no Forms now. This is the relationship between the Form and the Formless. Another example: You have milk and you want to drink it. You need a cup for that. In the same way, for devotion you need the cup called Form.

Question: Swami, people say God is Omnipresent. Please explain this.

In the *Gita* Krishna says: "I am the seed from which everything came". This means that God is the primordial source of everything. For example, you plant a mango seed in the ground. This then becomes a small sapling, grows into a big tree, and then flowers. Then there are fruits and in each of these fruit there is a seed. The tree represents Creation; the fruits represent beings; and the seed in the fruits represent God!



Part II: The Basic Cosmic Structure and the Imbalance Produced by Man

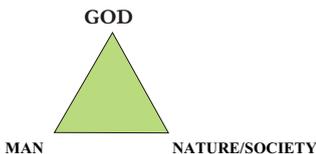
DEAR READER,

In the last issue, we started a new feature about Getting Spiritually Better. We offer below the second instalment. We hope you like it, and would share it with others who are interested in enquiry and self-improvement. Do write and tell us what you think, how you find it, whether it is useful, and in what ways this feature can be improved.

Thank you and Jai Sai Ram.

SGH Team.

It is convenient to pursue our enquiry by adopting a 'triangular view' of God and Creation as below:



This is a Macro view, so to say. The micro view would be discussed later.

What is to be noted in the above are the following: 1) God is the Creator. He created Nature, and also man. 2) There are three links between God and man, between God and Nature, and thirdly between man and Nature/Society. All three are important.

Modern man tends to view life dropping out one or more links. For example, the atheist drops God from the picture; thus, for him, there is only one link, i.e., that of man with Society/Nature. In particular, the atheist does not look upon Nature as Divine; rather, it is there for man to use and exploit as he pleases. Needless to

say that this leads to all kinds of problems.

There are others who accept God. They also accept that God created Nature. However, in daily life, they forget this important fact. The net result is that for this class of people also, there are only two links. Even these are looked at piecemeal, as below:



Thus, the average person seeks to maintain a special and personal relationship with God, but when it comes to Nature and Society, he forgets that God is present in them also. Many devotees unconsciously adopt this attitude. They have great devotion for God, but when it comes to other people, they do not hesitate to be rude, for example. They simply refuse to see God in the other person, even though Swami has advised times without number that one must see God in all. In this context, it is good to recall what

Swami says about the individual, Society and God. He says: "The individual is a limb of the community. The community is a limb of Society. Society is a limb of Nature, and Nature is a limb of God."

We are not really distinct from each other; rather, we are organically linked to each other. This is no ordinary link; it is a Divine link. We must go through life constantly remembering these linkages. We are part of a whole not an ordinary whole but a **Cosmic Whole**. In other words, all of us are, at the practical level, limbs of God. Without this realisation, there would be imbalance.

Imbalance that one word sums up the attitude of most people today. True balance is not possible, unless one has a holistic view and one based on the basic Cosmic structure outlined earlier. An example:

Today, there is a tendency to promote more and more the sale of automobiles. This may be good for the auto industry, but is it good for the planet earth? Is it good for mankind? Just think of the -

pollution. One might say that one could build better cars this is more easily said than done. When it comes to brass tacks, there are all kinds of ifs and buts and lobbies. This became very evident during the Kyoto meet on pollution. Countries with huge auto industries resisted stringent emission norms. So, in the name of business and industrial progress, the auto industry is allowed to expand, adding to the carbon-dioxide burden. Similarly, coal-exporting countries were equally selfish and adamant in Kyoto about not reducing their exports.

As if all this is not enough, trees are in the meanwhile being recklessly felled in many parts of the world. God in His infinite mercy has given to trees and plants the job of cleaning up the carbon dioxide and replacing it with oxygen. But if trees are cut, then who is going to replace the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere with oxygen? And then, there is the problem of auto junk! Who is going to handle all the 'dead' cars, thrown away or abandoned as junk?

Committees may go into the matter and make recommendations but is that the sane way of dealing with the problem? If one goes to the root of the matter, it is excessive desire that is the problem. As Gandhi once remarked, **“The earth has enough to meet the needs of all the people living on it, but not enough to satisfy the greed of one man.”** So, the question arises whether too much technology is really a boon, as some make it out to be. [Recently, a newspaper carried an advertisement with the slogan: GREED IS GOOD! Is it?]

Science and Technology are both advancing at break-neck speed. Everyone thinks this is a great boon and a wonderful thing to happen. All kinds of scenarios are conjured up to argue how more science would lead to a better life. Just look back over the past forty years and ask if this promise has been fulfilled. In the late sixties and seventies, of the twentieth century, forecasters said that thanks to technology, by 2000 A.D. people would have a lot of leisure they would not have to work more than

three or at the most four days in the week. Has that happened? On the contrary, people are working more and harder. The Internet was hailed as a great blessing. Many now complain that they are chained to the computer for over ten hours a day and seven days a week.

Excessive technology is **NOT** an unmitigated blessing as is made out to be. The case of medical science provides additional proof. Yes, thanks to advances in medical science, small pox has been eradicated, polio almost conquered, diabetes brought under control, and so on. Many wonder-drugs have been created that have saved millions of lives. All this is true. But today, things are beginning to change. Research has become more and more expensive. Great advances are no doubt made but medical treatment is also becoming astronomically expensive. The result is that fewer and fewer people can afford the marvels that medical science now produces. Is this a good thing? In the name of profit and returns to their share-holders drug companies concentrate on drugs that the rich can afford and not on vaccines that can save millions of lives in the poor countries. Some even go to the extent of saying, “Let all those people die. That is Nature's way of taking care of over population.” Is this the right way to look at things?

It is not as if the rich have it good. They may pay more money and get the latest in treatment but it is not necessarily a soothing experience. Since manpower has become expensive, researchers are developing robots that would do the job of nurses. These robots would record the temperature, check the BP, give medicines, give drips, etc. For the hospital management, such robots would be a great boon. They can dispense with human nurses. These robots would work all the three shifts and not demand salary, pay hikes etc. But what about the patient? Will the robot speak kindly or would they programme the machine to 'speak' kind words? Nursing started with Florence Nightingale who has been immortalised in poem. She stood for

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human kindness and compassion. Service and kindness have always been the hallmark of the nursing profession. Are we to take it that replacement of human nurses by robots is really progress?

Greed is the driving force behind many of so-called modern advances and 'improvements'. God made the cow a vegetarian. The cow was supposed to provide man with milk. Man decided that the cow was good food for him and began to kill it and eat it. To improve the fat content, he began to feed meat to the cow. And one fine day, he ended up with the mad-cow disease.

Then, there is the whole world of genetic engineering and cloning that makes one shudder. A person asked a scientist: “You take a cell from me and clone another person just like me. Who is this person? Is he my brother, my son, or myself?” No one has an answer to this question.

There can always be too much of 'good'. Excessive material progress can hamper and not aid. The standard of living might have improved but the **QUALITY OF LIFE** has definitely deteriorated in the so-called advanced countries. Stress has become a big killer. Families are getting shattered. In fact, families are disappearing. There is no need to go into this horrifying phenomenon; everyone knows what is happening.

Man has now begun to play God, instead of trying to rise to the level of God. The story of Prahalada that Swami often narrates epitomises the point. The father Hiranyakashipu was the prototype of the modern scientist. He rejected God and regarded himself as supreme. The son Prahalada did not agree with this view and surrendered to God. In the end, the father perished while the Lord redeemed the son.

We must learn from this tale. God has come here to help us. He very much wants to. But He cannot, unless we allow Him to! This implies that we must surrender to Him. ▶

We must firmly reject some modern shibboleths such as:

- More Science and more Technology can only do good.
- Nature is there meant to be exploited by us.
- The sky is the limit for desires.
- There are only rights and no responsibilities.
- Ethics and morality are merely a matter of convenience.
- Selfishness is a bad word invented to decry freedom and self-centred approach to life.

No, God did not create this world for us to exploit. He provided us with innumerable bounties so that we could be happy and spend our time contemplating on Him. God wants us to give and not grab. Giving selflessly is Divine, and the more we do so, the closer we come to God.

Everyone admires Mother Teresa, who became a legend in her own time. There is a nice story about her that goes as follows: Once, an American tourist came to Calcutta and saw Mother rescuing a dying man from the gutter in order to comfort him in the last moments. The tourist was aghast and said, "Gee, I would not do that for even a million dollars." Mother Teresa smiled and said, "I wouldn't either. In fact, I would not do it even for two million dollars." The American was puzzled and replied, "But, but, you are doing it now!" "Ah", said the Mother, "This I am doing for God!"



That, in a nutshell, describes how to live in harmony with the 'basic triangle' of Creation. Today everybody complains about cruelty, corruption, etc. People want politicians and businessmen to speak the truth. How would anyone speak the truth, if *Sathya, Dharma*, etc., are banished from schools? How can people be moral, if they do not have the faintest idea about what morality is in the first place? Is it

meaningful to expect such a thing?

Man has introduced a **tremendous** imbalance in God's scheme of things. How can we restore the balance? This is the question that must concern every individual on this planet. All of us have to pause and ponder.

ADDITIONAL NOTES RELATING TO THE ABOVE

- In the Drama of Creation, we see three entities: God, man and Nature/Society.
- Of these three, clearly, the most important is God, because the other two have come from God. In fact, as Swami often says, man is a limb of Society, Society is a limb of Nature, and Nature itself is a limb of God.
- Every individual must clearly understand this underlying "triangular structure" and be in total harmony with it.
- Specifically, every individual must recognize that he/she is a Spark of the Divine. Not merely recognize, but act and behave like a Spark of the Divine! All trouble starts from the fact that people a) fail to recognize this fact, and b) even if they do, ignore the fact.
- In addition, one must remember that God is present everywhere. He is immanent in everything in the Universe, animate as well as inanimate.
- In this context, quoting a Vedic hymn, Swami often tells us: *HE stands on thousands of feet, and sees through thousands of eyes.* What this means is that the Cosmic Form of God in the gross world is nothing but the **sum total** of everything that exists in the physical Universe.
- There are three bonds in the SO-CALLED Golden Triangle

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depicted above. These three bonds illustrate the three-fold aspect of the Divine in the Universe. **All** the bonds are important.

- These days, most people find it convenient to forget the fact that God created Nature and that He is immanent in Society. Thus, straightaway, the triangle loses one side.
- So the first step is that the triangle becomes a simple angle with two sides. Next, the two sides get separated, and one has just two lines! One line represents man's link with God, and the other line represents man's link with Nature/Society. This was illustrated earlier.
- This is the beginning of pure disaster. Man develops the deluded feeling that he has got it all worked out. He prays to God, meticulously observes rituals, etc. He goes on pilgrimages, visits temples, and gives out a small amount of money in charity. After all this, he feels fine. He then goes out into Society and behaves just as he wants. He has no compunctions about morality in community and public life. He cheats at every conceivable opportunity, and thinks it is perfectly OK in the context of survival, going ahead, etc.
- This is the way man gets out of step. When one person does this, others tend to copy, especially if the person who starts it all is a so-called pillar of Society. This stresses the crucial importance of role models. That is why there is an Indian Proverb: *As is the King, so are the subjects.*

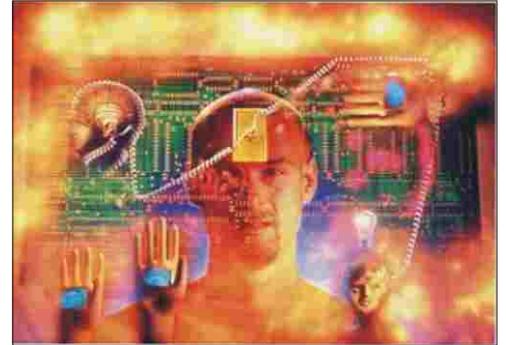
Getting Spiritually Better

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- In today's Society, role models like Gandhi who strove hard to uphold *Sathya* and *Dharma* are very scarce. A few may exist, but today's media culture is such that these noble souls are not considered worth reporting upon. Goodness is no longer considered as news worthy of printing. Just think about it how much space does the media of the world devote to Baba? But they have all the paper-space for crime and scandals!
- Today, in every field of human endeavour, there are heroes and role models, except where *Sathya* and *Dharma* are considered. There are football heroes, movie stars who are aped, and so on; but is there another Gandhi amongst humans? Nowhere in sight!
- Today's Society is rather like an aircraft with failed engines. What is the reason? Imbalance of the human Mind.
- If the individual who is unbalanced commands a lot of influence [like, Hitler, for example did], then great disaster can follow.
- Hitler's policies were patently evil, and quite evident. But today, evil wears a clever masquerade. Driven by excessive greed, business poses as a great saviour of mankind and as the only solution to the problems of today. In the process, it is dragging humanity into disaster.
- Internal imbalance can blind a person. The person knows there is disaster ahead, but does not care.

In many respects, humanity today is like the drug addict who knows that drugs are very bad for him and yet does want to stop.

- Who is a balanced person? One who is detached under all circumstances alone is a balanced person.
- How come this so-called balanced person is indifferent to both good and bad? Ah! There is an important point here. What we normally describe as "good" is purely in worldly terms. When one is not attached to the world, then this so-called good does not specifically appear to be good. Good and bad are just the ups and downs of the Divine Drama.
- But is it realistic to ask a person to be unaffected by good and bad, even if they are only "so-called"? May be not when one is at the very early stages of a seeker. But if one is serious, then one must remain cool and unaffected.
- But is feasible? Is it possible? Oh yes, and it has happened, oftener than we realise. Take the case of a good tennis player, who is down by two sets. The third set is in progress, and he is appearing to lose grip. And then he makes a firm determination not to lose his cool. Slowly he turns the third set to his advantage and finally wins it. Retaining his cool, he then goes on to win the fourth, and finally, holding on to his cool, he clinches the fifth and the final set. Has not this sort of thing happened? Why then do we maintain that being cool in the face of adversity is impossible?
- With strong faith in God, it IS possible to be balanced and cool always. With strong and unflinching commitment to *Sathya* and *Dharma*, it IS possible to always remain balanced.

- What is needed is **DETERMINATION, FIRM DETERMINATION.** Swami says, *"If you take one step, I shall take ten if not a hundred steps towards you"*. He also adds, *"The more determined you are, the more determined I shall be to help you!"*



POINTS TO PONDER OVER

- Ancients in all parts of the world appear to have recognised the existence of the "Golden Triangle", and learnt to live in harmony with others as well as with Nature. When and how did things start going wrong?
- Many factors contribute to today's imbalance. Can one list them according to the damage they create?
- If the damage has to be contained and controlled, where exactly should one start?
- In what way am I contributing personally to this imbalance?
- What should I do to mitigate this imbalance and where should I start?

ASSIGNMENT

- Collect all Baba quotes pertinent to this Chapter.
- Collect anecdotes relating imbalance, detachment, proper perspectives etc. [See, for example, the story narrated by Swami in SUMMER SHOWERS IN BIRNDAVAN, 2000, page 149.]
- Here is one example of imbalance created by corporate greed. Lately, the fishermen of Senegal in West Africa are finding that their catch is getting less and less. Reason? Heavy fishing by mechanised trawlers from Japan and various

European countries. When the fish population is demolished, the trawlers go away to other areas. The local fishermen have to stay where they are and suffer. This is happening in many parts of the world.

- In Goa, there was another kind of trouble. The Government imposed a ban on fishing for sometime, to allow the heavily-depleted fish population to recover. The depletion had occurred due to reckless fishing, and the environmental groups had campaigned for a temporary ban. But the fishermen who did not understand anything about imbalance and population dynamics, protested violently.

They did not realise that they there is only so much that Nature can take. In today's world, rich corporations often behave like ignorant and uneducated fishermen. Greed blinds the educated and the uneducated alike.

- Line up some case-studies like the above, that you think could be discussed with fellow-seekers. The important thing is the restoration of balance. That can come about only when one goes into the Heart. The big question is how to motivate people to look inside? What, according to you, are the steps one should take?

Congratulations!!!

Heart to Heart offers hearty congratulations to
Shri Y. Siva Rama Krishnaiah,
 Principal, Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School,
 on the receiving the prestigious,
National Award for Teachers of Outstanding Merit,
 from the Government of India.

On **September 5th, 2003** Sri Siva Rama Krishnaiah had the honour of receiving the award from **His Excellency Dr.A.PJ Abdul Kalam, the President of India.** The award carries a Certificate of Merit, a Silver Medal and a Cash Prize of Rs. 25000/-.



**We at Heart to Heart, pray to Bhagwan to guide and inspire him to move on...
 triumphant, on this noble path!**

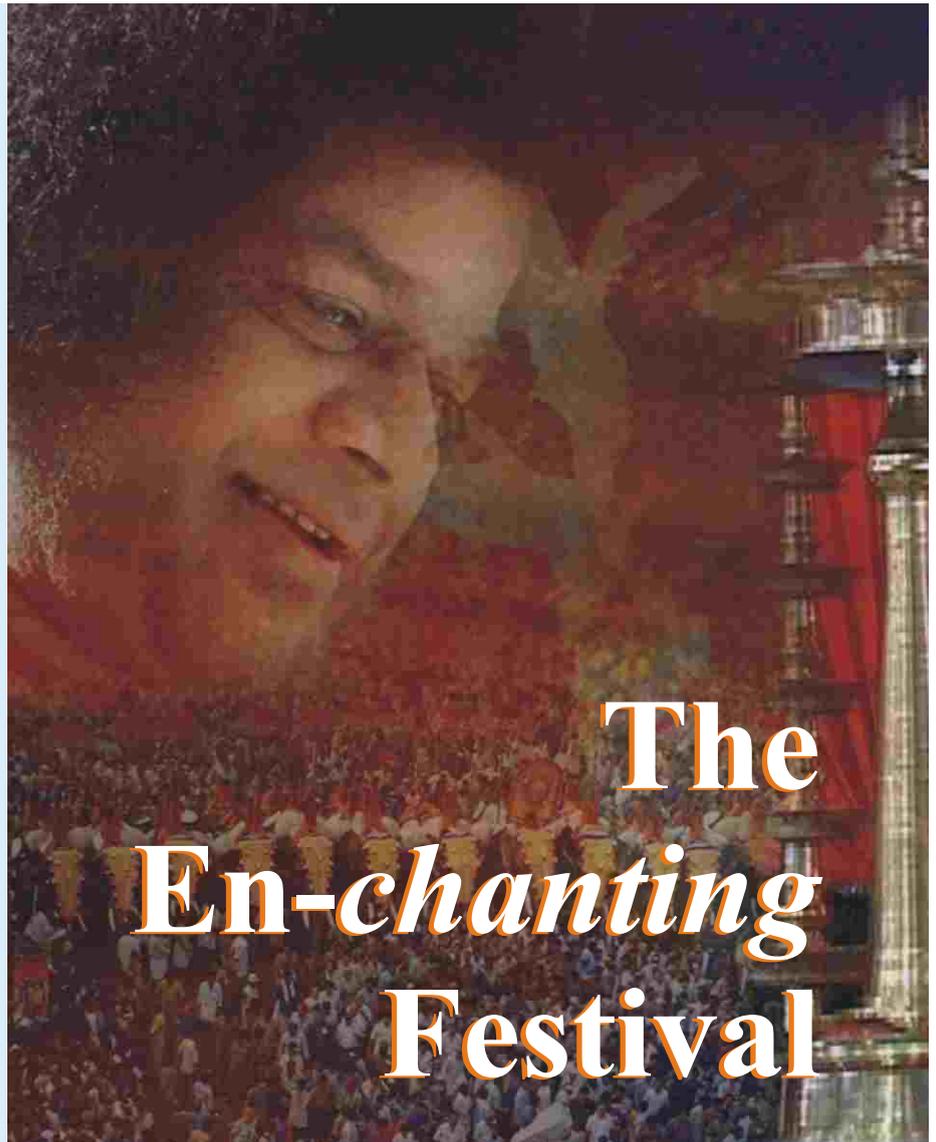
The legends are many...and all have their reasons to celebrate the Festival, in myriad ways. From the Ghats of Hoogly, to the Maths at Kanchi...a billion bow in reverence to the Mother. It's the festival of the nine nights...the Navaratri. A legend says that the Mother fought the dark forces for nine nights to give mankind goodness and godliness on the tenth morn and for eternity.

Elsewhere, a Prince from Ayodhya battled a demon for 10 days to slay him, achieved an Incarnation's purpose and gave mankind a reason to celebrate...Dussera. People, nation over, sing the praise of Rama, enact the story of His life, burn effigies of evil, and dance for the good upon the earth.

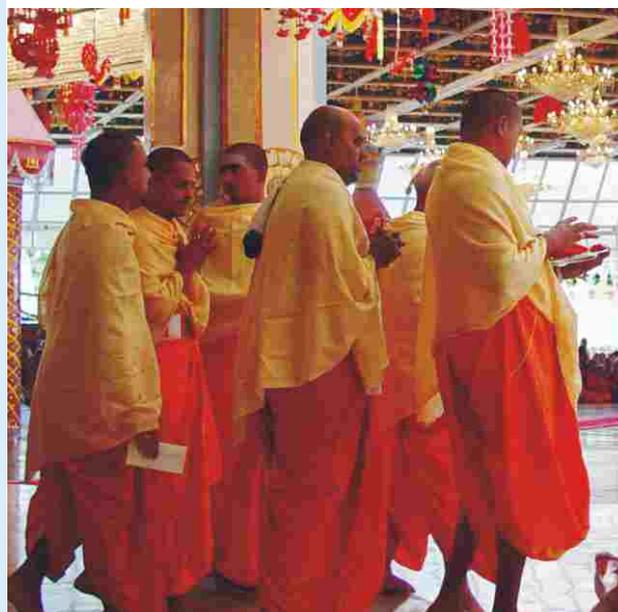
At Prasanthi Nilayam, the thousands who throng at the Lotus Feet have all the above reasons to rejoice. And even more...

Here, Dussera marks the commencement of a glorious sacrifice, the **VEDA PURUSHA SAPTAAHA GNANA YAGNA**. Vedic chants reverberate and charge the air during this weeklong propitiation of the Vedic Persona-God, presided by the Persona Himself- Bhagwan Sri Satya Sai Baba! On the 6th October 1961, the first Veda Purusha Saptaha Gnana Yagna was conducted at Prasanthi Nilayam with the sole purpose of bringing about the welfare of all humanity. Since then the festival of Dussera has regularly witnessed this celebrated event.

Heart to Heart takes you on a journey through this enchanting festival...



The Enchanting Festival



They come resplendent, both their silken ochre garb and in their knowledge of the Vedic Lore. These venerated priests consider the participation in this Yagna a boon from God! The Chief Priest, called the Brahma of the Yagna, leads them on the first day of the Yagna, chanting mantras in the procession, to the Poornachandra Hall.

Dussera at Prasanthi Nilayam



Trumpets and drums herald the start of the procession for the Yagna, from the Mandir to the Auditorium. A richly caparisoned Sai Geeta leads the procession, followed by various musicians and priest chanting hymns. Of course, the students from Sai Institutions join the priests in the Chanting.

Meanwhile, the throng of thousands is already in raptures, for, the Lord has come on the stage, to Bless them with His Darshan.



The Yagna proper begins with the ceremonial lighting of the Sacred Fire, amidst the chanting of the Vedas. In keeping with tradition, two priests rotate one piece of wood to and fro against a stationary block of wood, while a third one exerts necessary pressure to generate the heat required to igniting the friction area. The small spark is nursed with expert care, and very soon the sacrificial pit is transformed into a merrily blazing fire.

Dussera at Prasanthi Nilayam



Swami, seated on a chair atop the stage, watches all this with the air of an uninvolved spectator, the Witness, the *Purusha*!

Around the altar, sit three or four priests, reciting Vedic Hymns as they pour libations of clarified butter, into the flames. This is the *Rudra Homam*, an invocation to Lord Shiva, the Destroyer of Evil.



The central altar is flanked on one side by a group of students chanting Vedam, and on the other side, by a group of distinguished experts who have attained mastery over the Veda. They recite the Yajur Veda, a treatise on Yagnas and ceremonial acts. Both these groups simultaneously chant the Hymns so loud and clear that the atmosphere of Prasanthi Nilayam resounds to their vibrations.

Dussera at Prasanthi Nilayam

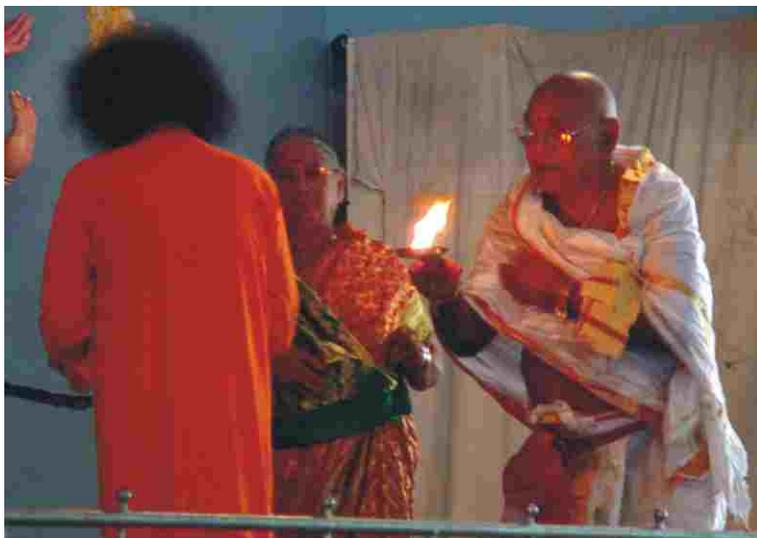


A priest with an athletic build performs Suryanamaskar or worship of the Sun as a visible symbol of the Supreme, to the left of the sacrificial pit. He circumambulates around the offerings chanting Hymns and then prostrates, more than a hundred times a day. But when Swami is present, the priest never misses the chance of going around Him, the source of all Energy, and prostrates

Meanwhile the other priests recite sacred epics like the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavatam and even the Devi Bhagavatam, during the period of the entire Yagna. Yet another priest worships the *Sri Chakra*, a mystic drawing representing the Supreme Mother.



On the extreme right of the stage is performed the worship of the Mother Goddess. That place is also reserved for performing the daily Arati after all the ceremonies are over for each day at noon.

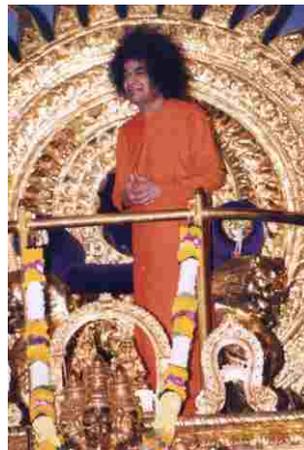


Dussera at Prasanthi Nilayam



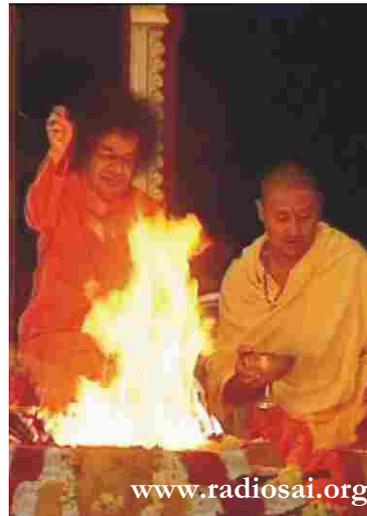
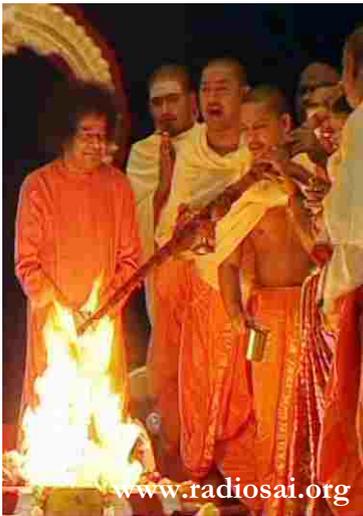
Everyday in the evening, the Sai Kulwanth hall is filled to capacity. There is the Prasanthi Vidwan Mahasabha where Swami blesses some selected students and Elders to address the gathering on various spiritual topics. Above all, He himself speaks everyday elucidating the most sublime of spiritual topics in the simplest possible way!

The pre-final day is the Ayudha puja when all the instruments of work are worshipped. Swami comes to the garage in the Kulwanth hall where the drivers are waiting, their cars decorated with beautiful garlands. Swami gives each one of them a chance to drive Him in their respective vehicles. But the moment to watch out for is when he ascends the golden chariot. A sight for the Gods!



The Final day of the Yagna is on Vijaydashami, the Tenth day, wherein the Poornahuti or the Valedictory offering is made. The day begins with an extraordinary manifestation of spiritual fervor among the pundits and the participants of the Yagna. Everyone in the Poornachandra Hall is expectantly waiting to see Baba accept the final offering of the Yagna. When the prescribed numbers of offerings have been completed, the priests sit on either side of the sacrificial altar. Swami ascends the stage amidst the chanting of the Vedic hymns and seats himself on a pedestal behind the sacrificial fire.

Dussera at Prasanthi Nilayam



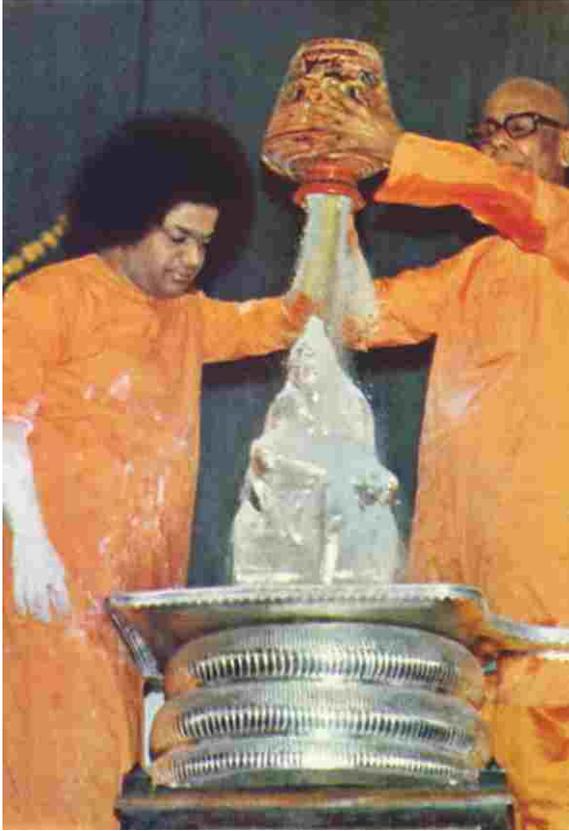
When the chanting reaches a crescendo, Swami with a sudden wave of His hand manifests a number of precious gems. As they shine in brilliance, he offers them, one by one, unto the sacrificial fire. Everyone present in the vast hall is filled with awe on witnessing this most sacred and divine act, the Poornaahuthi! The priests then make their grand offering to the Veda Purusha.

The priests circumambulate Swami and one by one, prostrate at His feet. Grateful indeed they are for having been selected to officiate in a Yagnam conducted by God himself!



A few minutes later Swami comes down the stage, with a priest following him holding sacred water in a bowl. Swami, holding a big brush in his hand, dips it in the holy water and sprinkles it on the devotees. As Bhagawan goes around the place sprinkling holy water, the students and the staff, the young and the old, the men and the women, seated inside and outside the Poornachandra, in short, everyone is blessed by this holy shower of Divine grace! The crowd simply goes delirious on receiving this great blessing!

Dussera at Prasanthi Nilayam



As a grand finale, in the yesteryears, on the Poornahuthi day, there was also the famous Vibhuthi Abhishekam where Swami churned an upturned empty vessel to bathe the statue of Shirdi Baba in a continuous shower of sacred ash... unbelievable, but true!

Thus comes to a close the Yagna and Dussera...but the message that Swami gives, through this enchanting festival, is engraved forever in the hearts of those who, witness it or even read about it:

*“ The heart of man itself is the sacrificial fire altar.
The pangs of desires are the tongues of flame; the evil
that is in man is the offering that goes into the fire and
the treasure of unruffled Ananda is the ultimate gain.
That is the real Yagna that you have to perform everyday
in your life.”*



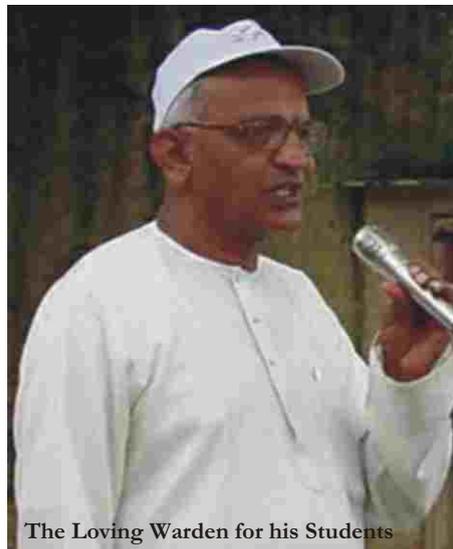
The Change

(Part I of II)

The event that changed the course of my life happened in October 1965 when I was in my twentieth year. That was my first meeting with Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba at Prasanthi Nilayam, Puttaparthi. At that time I was studying in the University College of Engineering at Bangalore, in my Pre-final year of the five-year Engineering course. The prompting to go to Puttaparthi came to me from a reputed educationalist of Karnataka, Narayana Bhatt. He was lovingly referred to by his students and followers as "ANNA", meaning elder brother. I had heard about Sai Baba of Puttaparthi from other persons, before I met Anna; but much of it was vicious criticism of Sai Baba. Therefore my attitude towards HIM was marked by disbelief and ridicule.

In September 1965, along with a few of my college mates, I attended a meeting of the "Thinkers' Forum" started by Anna. The main aim of this Forum was to inculcate idealism in youth, especially the college students of Bangalore. About thirty students attended the monthly meetings of this Forum regularly. Anna was a very inspiring speaker and on that day he spoke about the then prevailing National scenario and the importance of the role of youth in the task of National rejuvenation. I was highly impressed by his talk. His was a simple and straight forward approach to the topic. He spoke about the inspiring examples of Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi. During the course of his talk he made a very respectful reference to Sai Baba of Puttaparthi. The rebel and sceptic in me could not accept what Anna said of Sai Baba. I interrupted him in the middle and asked him a few questions about Sai Baba. Anna did not mind my interruption and answered my questions very patiently. But I was not convinced and so I made a few caustic remarks

about Sai Baba, saying that as a student of science I could not accept what he said about Sai Baba's miracles. Obviously I had lost my cool, but he had not. Anna asked me, "Have you seen Sai Baba?" "No", I answered. My voice and the way I said "No" made it clear that I



The Loving Warden for his Students

was not interested in seeing Sai Baba. He asked me again, "Have you read any books by Sai Baba?" "No". "Have you read any books on Sai Baba?" "No", I answered again. "Have you heard anything about Sai Baba from persons devoted to HIM?" "No. Maybe the first one is yourself". My dislike for devotees of Sai Baba was clearly manifested in my answer. Anna smiled and asked me, "May I please know your name?" "Narasimhamurthy", I said casually. Anna then said, "Narasimhamurthy, you say you are a student of Science. You have not seen Sai Baba nor read anything about HIM. You have not heard anything about HIM from HIS devotees or admirers. Obviously whatever you know about HIM, you would have heard from HIS critics. Is it scientific on your part to pass a judgement on HIM?" There was neither vehemence nor sarcasm in his voice. In fact it was full of love and affection. I

Dear Reader,

This is the transcript of a radio talk on SGH by Sri B.N. Narasimhamurthy; the Warden of Sri Sathya Sai Student's Hostel at Brindavan. He is an excellent orator and above all an ardent devotee of Bhagavan, serving Him in His educational institutions for the past three decades. This transcript will be presented in two parts.

was totally disarmed, and did not know how to answer his question. But it was amply clear that Anna did not like my discomfiture, and he continued without waiting for my answer. He said, "I suggest you should see Sri Sathya Sai Baba yourself and then come to a conclusion about HIM." Any sense of triumph was conspicuous by its absence in his voice. On the other hand I got a feeling that he was uncomfortable about my predicament. He said, "I like your frankness and forthright nature. If you have time, kindly meet me afterwards". "Yes sir, thank you", I said and felt relieved. The meeting concluded after a while.

Later Anna talked to me and two of my classmates separately. He answered all our queries with deep understanding. The discussion continued for nearly two hours and at the end, I should say I was completely won over by Anna. But I could not get over my scepticism about Sai Baba, though I was willing to go to Puttaparthi to see HIM. Finally Anna said, "I am going to Puttaparthi next month. If it is convenient for you, you may come with me". I accepted the invitation very willingly. Thus the eagerness to see Sai Baba was aroused in my heart, and it grew day by day.

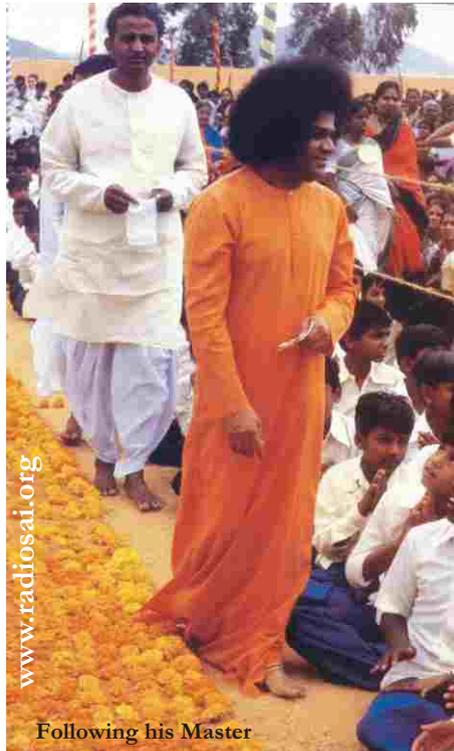
Within a month I visited Puttaparthi and had the *Darshan* of Sai Baba. HE called me for a personal Interview and I stood facing HIM in the vibrant atmosphere HIS room. HIS loving smile touched the softest corner of my heart. He looked at me as if HE knew me for ages. A similar feeling was roused in me. HE said, "You have come here late since you listened to wrong things spoken by others. That is all right. You have indigestion. Not in your stomach, but in your head!" HE smiled heartily and continued, "You are worrying too much about your future. Do not worry. Your future is safe and secure in Swami's hands. Be happy."

I was overwhelmed by HIS love and concern and dumbstruck by the correctness of the statements made by HIM. I could not speak a word. Thus Sai Baba became my Swami, the Divine Master.

Let me now tell you what Swami meant by Indigestion in my head. Both my mother and father were highly devoted to God. Even today I remember very clearly the annual *Sathya Narayana Puja* performed at our home, when I was studying in primary school. It was performed with great devotion and not merely as a ritual. I used to take an active part with much enthusiasm in making arrangements for the *Puja*, and also sat by the side of my parents throughout the ceremony. At least a hundred persons would be fed at our home after the *Puja*. My parents encouraged me to visit temples on festival days and listen to *Hari Kathas*, the stories of GOD. During the week long celebration of Sri Rama Navami festival, I listened to *Hari Kathas* day after day with great enthusiasm and my heart resonated with deep feelings of devotion to these stories of great devotees and I instantly memorized those stories and songs. Many times my mother would ask me to sing the songs that I had learnt, and she would enjoy listening to them. Faith in God and kindness to fellow beings are hallmarks of my saintly mother. I feel proud to be the son of such a mother who embodied true Indian womanhood. But as I grew up and entered the high school, somewhere the silken bond of love for God in my heart was cut and I stopped visiting temples and attending religious functions. Even when I did it, I did it with a little compulsion and as an empty ritual. Probably one important reason for my forgetting God completely was too much of attention and adoration I received everywhere because of a brilliant brain and a photographic memory, in an educational system where moral and spiritual training was totally absent.

When I passed out of the school and joined the Engineering College in Bangalore, I came under the influence of Marxist philosophy which had become, among the students and teachers at that time, a passion with some and a fashion with others. I should say that spontaneous sympathy for the

poor which I inherited from my mother was the cause for my Marxist leanings. A superficial study of Karl Marx and Lenin made me a proud atheist. I took great pride and joy in looking for believers among my college mates and friends and engaging them in arguments over the existence of God.



Life went on smoothly for me for nearly two years in the new-found joy of youthful intellectual arrogance, riding utopian idealism of a new world, freed from all types of inequalities. But God, to whom I had prayed earnestly in my childhood, did not forget and dismiss me in spite of my becoming an atheist. My mother's prayers for me could be one more reason for God forgiving my faults. He sent two of HIS most terrible hounds to hunt me down and take me to HIMSELF. One was the fear of death which seized me suddenly, and the other was the mystery of life in this enigmatic universe.

Both of them became obsessions of my mind. I could not get them out of my thoughts even for a moment. I lost all zest for life and spent many sleepless nights. There was none with whom I could confide. When I confided my problems to the Principal of the College where I had studied my Intermediate Course, he very simplistically fixed an

The Change

appointment for me with the Director of Institute of Mental Health, who was his good friend. But I was sure that nothing was wrong with my mind; instead, I used to wonder why others were not haunted by those problems and how they could sleep over those stark realities of life.

For nearly three months I led a life of mental turmoil and torment. My life became very disorderly and indisciplined, and my attendance in classes became very irregular. Parents were away in a town forty miles from Bangalore, where I stayed in the University Hostel attached to the Engineering College. My deep attachment to my parents made me hide my suffering from them. What compounded my agony was that there was now no God to pray to. But the merciful God did not wait for my prayers. He sent one of His angels in the form of my classmate to rescue me from my hopeless state.

His name was Madhav, and I had met him for the first time in my high-school days in a neighbouring town. I had gone there to represent my school in an intra-school debate. Madhav represented his school in that town. We had met each other thrice in our schooldays on similar occasions in different towns. We became classmates in the Engineering College but there was no friendship between us in the first two years. Ideologically, there was no meeting ground. He was a staunch follower of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. In those days I despised and even looked down upon believers. Madhav and I lived in the same block in the hostel, separated by three rooms. Because of inner turmoil, I was leading a very disorderly life at that time. My books, clothes and other belongings lay thrown around the place in my room, which I shared with two other college mates.

One evening when I got up from a long nap I was surprised to find my place tiny and clean. My roommates had not done it nor did they know who had done it. The same thing repeated on the next day also. I wanted to find out my benefactor on the third day. I lay down on the cot pretending to be asleep and waited. After about thirty minutes, Madhav entered. He cleaned up the place, set my books and clothes in order and then ▶

went away. I could not fathom his intentions in doing it. I went to his room that evening and confronted him with the question, "Why did you do it?" He just smiled and said, "I like you, and I like to do it for you. That is all." His warmth was very soothing for my troubled heart. From that day, our friendship developed.

We spent quite a lot of time discussing and debating our ideologies with no meeting ground, apparently. However, there was one thing common to both, and that was our natural sympathy for the poor and the down trodden. Gradually I confided my inner troubles and turmoil to him. He said that those were the signs of a true spiritual aspirant, and that I should develop faith in God. I rejected his remark vehemently, and wanted him to prove to me scientifically the existence of God. He failed to convince me and I bombarded him with the ideas of many Western agnostics that I had studied. He surprised me by saying that he was praying to Sri Ramakrishna for my happiness and solace.

One evening we went out of the hostel after dinner for a walk in the Cubbon Park which was nearby. Our claims and counterclaims on the topic of existence of God lasted nearly three hours. At the end, both were exhausted. I felt that mental unrest had penetrated into him also, since I had disturbed his faith in God. Finally I told him, "I am sorry for what I have done to you. All my logic and rationalism have not given me any happiness. I could see your faith in God had given you happiness and peace which I have disturbed now. Believe me; I want to know whether God exists. And if HE is merciful as all believers claim HIM to be; there is no reason why I should not develop faith by tomorrow morning."

When we returned to hostel, it was past midnight. I entered my room and put on the table lamp. I found a magazine which Madhav had left on my table before we went out. There was a lovely picture of Jesus Christ that adorned the cover page. There were strange feelings in my heart. Suddenly I broke down and wept bitterly. With tears rolling down the eyes, I put out the table lamp and went to bed. A surprising prayer went out from my

troubled heart: "Oh GOD, if You really exist, if You are all merciful as Your devotees claim; shower Your kindness on me and grant me faith."

I do not know how long I cried in my bed before sleep overtook me. When I got up late in the morning the unbelievable had happened. I had faith in God. My mental torment of three months had ended with the gift of faith from the All-merciful One. I ran to Madhav and told him what had happened. His face lit up with joy, he hugged me and danced. It was a day great celebration for both of us. Our friendship assumed a new meaning for me from that day.

As I evinced interest in Ramakrishna's and Vivekananda's literature, Madhav gave me some books. Among the very first books I read was *Jnana Yoga* by Swami Vivekananda, which quenched my intellectual thirst to know about the mystery of death and the enigma of creation. Later I studied the life of Sri Ramakrishna, and it satisfied my heart's hunger to be with God. But I could not reconcile myself to the idea of *Avatar*, God coming down as man on earth. There could be men of God, call them Saints, Prophets or Messiahs. But how could God, the Inscrutable and Infinite Power sustaining the Universe, be born on this tiny earth, which is but a speck in this vast Universe. Of course, I prayed to God for an answer.

Madhav and I, visited Sri Ramakrishna Ashram in Bangalore, attended the prayers and met the monks there. Madhav confided to me his desire to join the order of monks of the Ashram after his education. I was not decided about my future. Though my spiritual quest had found the answer in Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, I was finding it difficult to shake off the political idealism instilled via Marx and Lenin. I had also found a new political idol in Mahatma Gandhi. In addition, I was also thinking as to how I could help my parents in bearing the burden of a large family with eleven children, who had to be brought up and educated. Of course, I found a new strength in prayer to God, which quelled the turbulence of my restless mind, at least temporarily. But the worries about my future remained, even as my affinities to Sri Ramakrishna

The Change

grew in intensity, day by day.

A few months, later one of my relatives invited me to his farm house on the outskirts of Bangalore. After lunch, I went out alone into the coconut grove for a stroll with a book on Sri Ramakrishna in my hand. It was a beautiful day with a cloudless sky, and the winds were very calm. I sat down under a coconut tree and opened the book at random. There was a beautiful photo of Sri Ramakrishna with his face glowing with kindness. I sobbed like a child looking at his face and prayed to him, "Oh., Compassionate Master, You were on this earth a hundred years before, to guide wavered children like us drifting in the ocean of *Samsara* but who is there today? We are orphaned without you. Kindly take hold of our hands and guide us to Yourself." This prayer continued in my heart ceaselessly for a few days. That was in August, 1965. Things started happening fast after that prayer.

In the month of September I met Anna in Bangalore and was prompted by him to go to Puttaparthi to see Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. On coming to know of my leanings towards Sai Baba, Madhav tried to dissuade me from going to Puttaparthi by saying that Sri Ramakrishna has warned earnest seekers against going after men of miracles. Usually, those who perform miracles are *Sadhakas* or fallen *Yogis*, deluded by *Siddhis* or occult powers, who have left the sacred path, to pursue name, fame, pleasures and wealth. I tried to persuade Madhav to meet Anna and know more about Sai Baba. But he refused. When I raised this topic of Sri Ramakrishna's warning to seekers about men of miracles, Anna smiled and said that what Sri Ramakrishna had said was completely true in respect of *Yogis* or *Sadhakas*, who have not reached the goal. It did not apply to *Avatars* and *Siddha Purushas* who perform miracles, keeping in their view *LOKA SANGRAHA*, the welfare of the world, and to sow seeds of faith in the hearts of men. Did not Sri Ramakrishna himself pray for the *Darshan* of Sri Krishna who performed amazing miracles? Sai Baba is a *Poorna Avatar* like Sri Krishna, Anna told me.

To be continued... in the next issue.

Gandhi And His Message

'AT NAOHKALI- "WHITHER FREEDOM?"'



The Father of a Nation

Loving Sai Ram and greetings from Prasanthinilayam.

The second of October is the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi. Many years ago, this day used to be observed with great fervour in India. But now, Gandhi is slowly slipping out of the radar screen as they say. And this is the very same man, about whom Einstein said, as well as I can remember, "Centuries hence people would scarce believe that such a man actually walked on earth, in flesh and blood."

Today, I would like to say something about Mahatma Gandhi, not because he is the Father of the Indian Nation but because he is one person who took *Sathya* and *Dharma* very seriously, all the time, every single moment of his life.

I would like to begin with a Spiritual Message to Humanity recorded by Gandhi in 1930 or 1931 - I do not exactly remember which year. That was the year when Gandhi went to England to attend what is known as the Round-Table Conference, convened by the British Government to find out about the demands for political freedom that Indians were making. This was Gandhi's second and last visit to England. His first was in the nineteenth

century, when he went there to study law. At that time he was a mere student, but now he was hailed as a Mahatma, and given respect even by the British, though often most grudgingly.

Gandhi's Message was made into a gramophone record and we had one in our house. It was the favourite of my father and indeed of all us. I have heard it many, many times, and in those days I knew the whole text by heart. It is such a beautiful speech, that I now wish to share it with you. Unfortunately, I cannot play for you Gandhi's voice but I shall give you the text of that famous Message. Basically, it is all about God. This is what Gandhi said:

"There is an indefinable mysterious power that pervades everything. I feel it, though I cannot see it. It is this unseen power which makes itself felt, and yet defies all proof because it is so unlike all that I perceive through the senses. It transcends the senses. But it is possible to reason out the existence of God to a limited extent."

Even in ordinary affairs, we know that people do not know who rules or why and how he rules; and yet they know that there is a power that certainly rules. In my tour last year in Mysore, I met many poor villagers and found upon enquiry that they did not know who ruled Mysore. They simply said that some God ruled it. If the knowledge of these poor villagers was so limited about their ruler, I,



Where words come out from The depths of Truth

who am infinitely lesser in relation to God than they to their ruler, need not be surprised if I do not realise the presence of God, the King of Kings. Nevertheless, I do feel as the poor villagers felt about Mysore, that there is orderliness in the Universe. There is an unalterable law governing everything and every being that exists or lives.

It is not a blind law for no blind law can govern the conduct of living beings. And thanks to the marvellous researches of Sir J.C. Bose, it can now be proved that even matter is life. That law then, which governs all life, is God. Law and the Lawgiver are one. I may not deny the Law or the Lawgiver because I know so little about it or Him. Just as my denial or ignorance of an earthly power will avail me nothing, even so my denial of God and His Law will not liberate me from its operation. Whereas, humble and mute acceptance of Divine authority makes life's journey easier, even as the acceptance of earthly rule makes life under it easier.

I do dimly perceive that whilst everything around me is ever changing, ever dying. There is underlying all that change a living power that is changeless, that holds all things together, that creates, dissolves and recreates. That informing power or spirit is God. And since nothing else that I see merely through the senses can or will persist, He alone is.

Is this power benevolent or malevolent? I see it purely as benevolent for I can see that in the midst of death, life persists, in the midst of untruth, Truth persists, and in the midst of darkness, Light persists. Hence I gather that God is Life, Truth and Light. He is Supreme Good. But He is no God who merely satisfies the intellect, if He ever does. God to be God must rule the Heart and transform it. He must express Himself in every smallest act of His votary. This can only be done through a definite realisation, more real than the five senses can ever produce.

Sense perceptions can be, and often are, false and deceptive, however real they may appear to us. Where there is realisation outside the senses, it is infallible. It is proved not by extraneous evidence but in the transformed conduct and character of those who have felt the real presence of God within. Such testimony is to be found in the experiences of an unbroken line of prophets and sages in all countries and climes. To reject this evidence is to deny oneself.

Gandhi And His Message

This realisation is preceded by an immovable faith.

He, who would in his own person test the fact of God's presence, can do so by a living faith. And since faith itself cannot be proved by extraneous evidence, the safest course is to believe in the Moral Government of the world and therefore in the supremacy of the Moral Law, the Law of Truth and Love. Exercise of this will be the safest, where there is a clear determination summarily to reject all that is contrary to Truth and Love.

I confess that I have no argument to convince through reason that which transcends reason. All I can advise is not to attempt the impossible. "

Well, that was what Gandhi said. Isn't that beautiful? All the people I have shared this text with are unanimous that Gandhi's Message is simple, direct, most effective, and highly relevant to the present time, even more than it was seventy years ago when it was first delivered.

Public perception about Gandhi has gone round a full circle. When he was alive, he was revered. Later, people began to slowly forget him, besides dismissing his various ideas as fads. But now, slowly the realisation is beginning to dawn that Gandhi was in fact far ahead of his times.

Let me explain all this. But first, I should perhaps draw attention to certain facets of his personality. Gandhi was a highly disciplined person, totally against wastage, of time, money and paper, in particular. Where paper was concerned, he would, for example, preserve little bits of paper to write notes on. Where money was concerned, he always travelled third class in train. And where time was concerned, he had a famous pocket watch tucked into his waist that he frequently consulted. Ten days before he was assassinated there was a bomb attack in the prayer meeting that he invariably addressed in the evening. This bomb attack took place in Delhi where Gandhi was at that time. In the

confusion that followed, Gandhi lost his watch. When this became known, a famous watch company immediately gifted him another watch. In fact on that fatal 30th January, 1948, when Gandhi came out for his usual evening prayer meeting, he was about five minutes late, and he was commenting on that even as the assassin pumped bullets into him.

This brings me to the next important point that I wish to make. In the *Gita*, Krishna says that man must leave his



'HE RAM'

mortal coil with the name of the Lord on his lips. And that precisely is what Gandhi did. He fell down saying "He Ram" twice. Gandhi was a great one for *Namasmarana* that Swami recommends to us so often. With Gandhi, chanting the name of the Lord was almost an obsession. Stressing how firmly he was committed to *Namasmarana*, Gandhi once declared, "My breath may stop, but my chanting will not."

Swami often says, "Follow the Master. Your Conscience is the Master." That precisely is what Gandhi did all the time. An example. In the early thirties of the twentieth century when Gandhi started the famous *Satyagraha* or Non-Co-operation movement, he envisaged it as a totally non-violent struggle. But within days of the start of *Satyagraha*, some extremist elements participating in the freedom struggle attacked a Police Station in Chauri Chaura, torched the building, and burnt alive many Policemen. Gandhi was very much upset by this incident. He



Dandi March

immediately called off the struggle, went on a fast for self-atonement Gandhi often did this and declared that he had committed a Himalayan blunder in ordering that particular campaign. The phrase Himalayan blunder thereafter became a part of the Indian lexicon.

Gandhi can be remembered for any number of things. After reading the *Gita*, I will always remember Gandhi for actually spiritualising life, every moment of it. What is remarkable is that though Gandhi was immersed in a political struggle to liberate India, even that political struggle became a spiritual journey for him. Let me give a few examples.

At one time, Gandhi decided to agitate against the punitive salt tax imposed by the British, which caused great hardship to the poor. He then launched what has since come to be known as the Salt *Satyagraha*. He asked people living all over India, especially those close to the coastal regions, to march to the sea shore, collect some sea water, evaporate it and make salt. This was to be the sign of protest and the declaration that when God had gifted the sea, man had no right to levy punitive taxes and amass wealth. So, protest marches to the sea-shore were organised all over the long coast line of

India on a particular day, and Gandhi himself prepared to lead one such march from the village of Dandi in Gujarat. This event has since come to be known as the Dandi March.

At the beginning of the Dandi March, Gandhi addressed the marchers and in that speech he drew pointed attention to the importance of the means as well as the end. These days, many people try to justify illegal and even immoral actions on the ground that the end objective is good. Gandhi correctly held that the means are as important as

Gandhi And His Message



The Father of a Nation

the end and that BOTH must be good. To emphasise this, he quoted the last *Sloka* of the *Gita*, comparing Krishna to the Pure End, and Arjuna to the sacred means. Gandhi declared that the *Gita* says where Krishna and Arjuna are both present there would be victory. In practical terms this means that the means as well as the end must both be good not for him the cliché that all is fair in love and war.

Gandhi was always meticulous in his observance of *Dharma*, even in political matters. As we all know, British India was partitioned into Pakistan and India in August 1947. Everything had then to be divided between the two countries, starting from the Army to the railway and the cash in the Reserve Bank. It so happened, that India had to pay to Pakistan 550 million rupees that was a lot of money in those days. But before this money could be transferred, there was so much trouble between Pakistan and India that the Government of India decided to withhold transfer of this money. Gandhi was of course not in the Government, but he publicly declared that it was wrong on the part of India to hold back what belonged to Pakistan, no matter what the differences. Gandhi was severely criticised for his views, but he stuck to his guns, defending himself by citing *Dharma*.

This brings me to Gandhi and Independence. Gandhi always wanted unity and strongly voiced it. But the forces of separation grew stronger and stronger, day by day. Eventually he had to resign himself to the partition of the country. Thus, on August 14th 1947, Pakistan was born and on the following day India became free from British rule. There were violent riots all over North

India preceding this historic day in fact violence continued even after, for quite some time. Anyway, on 15th August, people all over India rejoiced in celebration of the moment they had waited for, for nearly a hundred years in fact. But Gandhi was no where near the festivities. He was in Noakhali in rural Bengal, the scene of violent atrocities. Gandhi who was then well past seventy, walked on the fields from village to village to comfort the grieving ones. I still remember vividly the photos from that time, showing Gandhi walking across the fields.

I do not want to give you the impression that Gandhi was just a great Dharmic politician. Rather, he was one who showed how the *Gita* could be applied even in politics. For him, God and spirituality came first; the world was a mere platform to show his love for God.

Gandhi realised quite early that a true spiritual seeker must



At Lancashire, with the mill workers

a vividly practice sense and Mind control, which Bhagavan Baba draws our attention to so often. He led a much disciplined life, and also an extremely spartan one. As I told you earlier, he was very particular about time. Once he gave an interview to an American correspondent. The American arrived on the dot. Gandhi welcomed him into the hut where he lived, and with a smile asked the correspondent to sit on the floor there were no chairs. It was a bit uncomfortable but the correspondent sat down. Gandhi was spinning on the charka as he often used to, while the America sat transfixed, lost in the aura that surrounded Gandhi's gentle face. Five minutes passed and the correspondent had not asked a single question thought he had come with many. Gandhi glanced at his pocket watch that was by his side, smiled and said, "You know, five minutes of your time is already over and you have not

begun the interview yet!"

The *Gita* says that one should not hate anybody. Gandhi meticulously followed this injunction of the Lord. He always asserted that his quarrel was with only British Imperialism and not the British people. Thus, for example, when he went to England for the Round Table Conference, he made a special trip to Lancashire to address the mill workers there. What for? There is an interesting story behind this visit.

Everyone knows that the average Indian wears a dhoti. In the old days, the dhoti used to be made in India by Indian weavers using the yarn produced by villagers. When the British started ruling India, they saw a huge market for the sale of dhotis. Thus, many mills sprang up all over Lancashire to make dhotis for sale in India. Thanks to the finer quality and aggressive marketing,

literally millions of Indians lost their livelihood till Gandhi came and launched a strong movement urging people to buy only Indian-made dhotis. It was now the turn of the British textile industry to go out of business and the mill workers of Lancashire who became jobless began to hate

Gandhi. That is why Gandhi made a special point of visiting Lancashire and explaining the correct facts to the mill workers so that they understood that Gandhi did not hate them or have anything personal against them.

Incidentally, when the present Queen of England got married in 1947 [or was it 1946? I don't exactly remember], Gandhi sent her a wedding gift, a table



Bapu...with the Charkha

Gandhi And His Message



His Experiments with Truth

when prisoner Gandhi was brought in! Imagine that!! A Judge getting up to show respect to a prisoner. This is a true incident, beautifully captured in the famous film on Gandhi by Attenborough.

Gandhi can be remembered for many things. But I personally believe, he should be remembered for his devotion to God. About his unshakeable faith in God, he said that even if the whole of humanity rallied against him, asking him not to believe in God, he would not flinch. Such was his faith.

Gandhi strongly believed in ceiling on desires, which Swami so often commends to us. Thus Gandhi declared that the Earth has enough to meet the needs of the entire population, but not enough to satisfy the greed of just one man! In those days when Gandhi said this, people laughed. But now, with the concern for the environment etc., people are beginning to realise that Gandhi's model for

sustainable development had much merit in it.

Gandhi was not born a Mahatma; for many years he was just like most of us. But one fine day, he resolved firmly that he would be wedded to Truth. And that was the turning point. That is why he titled his autobiography as MY EXPERIMENTS WITH TRUTH.

If there is one lesson to be learnt from the life of Gandhi, I would say it is one-pointedness. For Gandhi, the twin objectives in life were *Sathya* and *Dharma*. Everything else was secondary, even the Independence of India for which he struggled so much.

JAI SAI RAM.

cloth made out yarn he had personally spun. No wonder there was always a natural admiration for Gandhi amongst the intellectuals even though they sometimes disagreed with him. Thus, for example, when Gandhi once appeared in a court to be tried for sedition before a British Judge, the Judge spontaneously rose in his seat

Coming soon.....

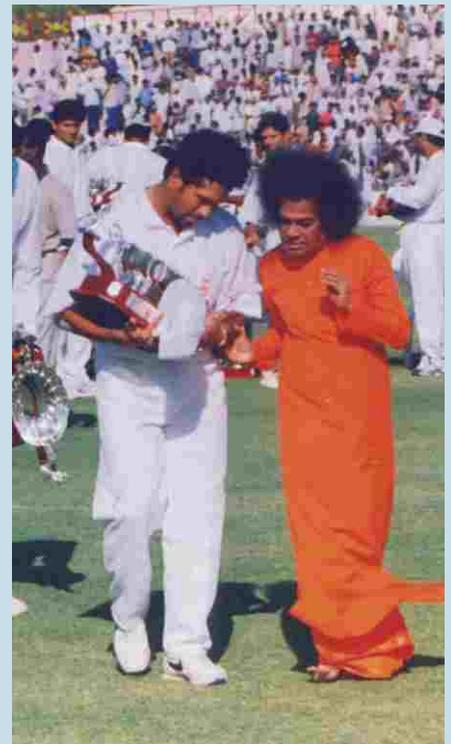
November has always been the most hectic and colorful of months at Prashanthi Nilayam. 22nd of November is the Convocation of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. It is also the day when the Sri Sathya Institute of Higher Medical sciences was established in 1991. Above all, there is November 23rd, the Birthday of our beloved Lord Sai (and Radio Sai too)!

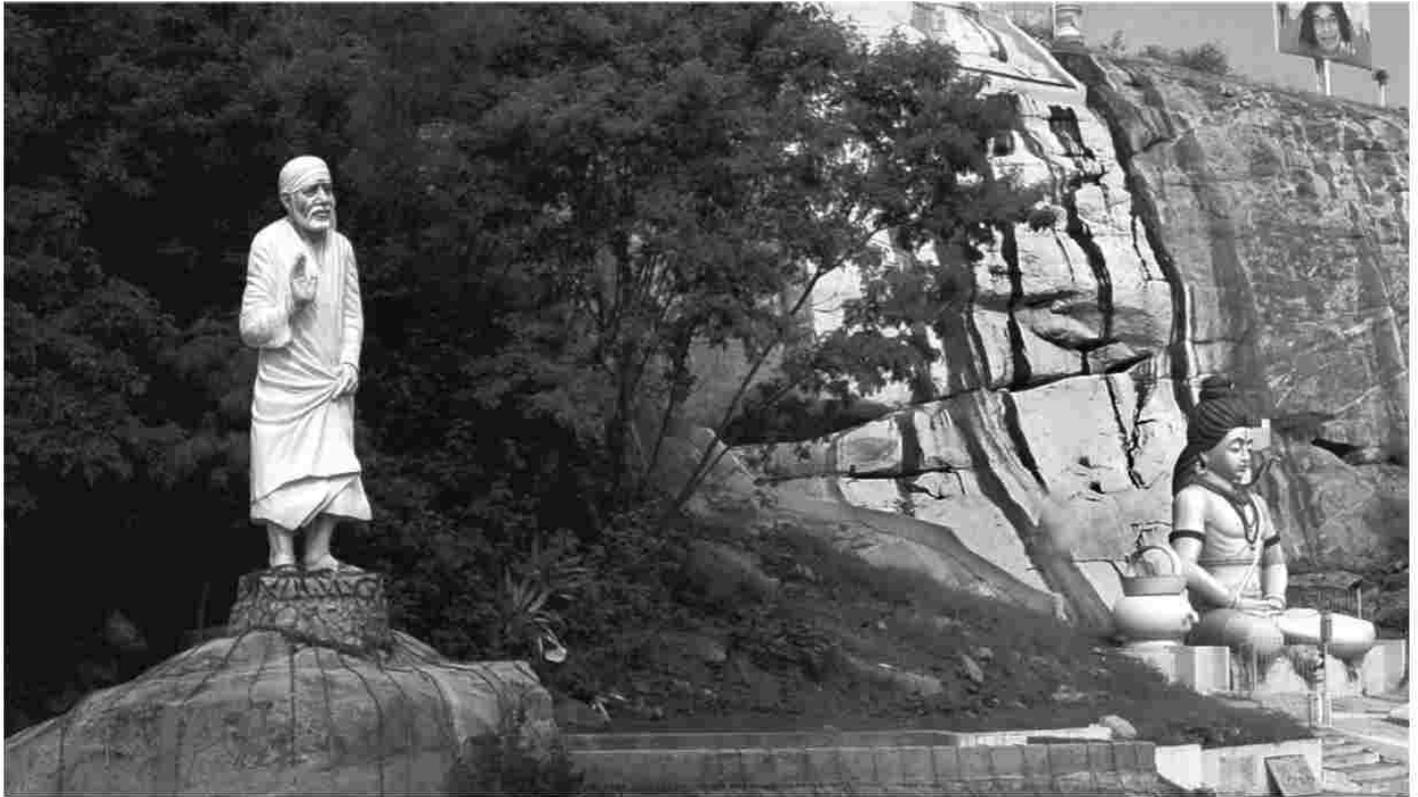
In the pipeline, from Heart to Heart, are some exciting, inspiring and colorful features on the glorious events of November! Watch out!



Coming next

Sri Sathya Sai Unity Cup: December 1996 saw a unique sporting event taking place at the beautiful Vidyagiri stadium at Prashanthi Nilayam. Life is a game: play it, says Baba and Cricket was chosen to be a symbol of life. Cricket stars from a number of





The Shirdi Sai *Avatar* is extra-ordinary and also enigmatic in many respects. Though this incarnation belongs to recent history, myth and mystery continue to surround the story of this *Avatar*. However, thanks to the enlightenment provided at various times by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, one is now in a position to place many of the unknown aspects of the Shirdi *Avatar* in a proper perspective.

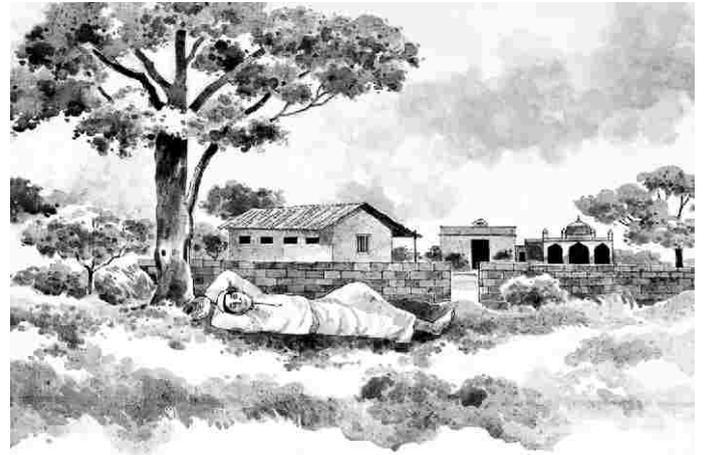
This calendar offers a summary of the life and philosophy of Shirdi Baba through a series of specially commissioned paintings. The summary is wrapped up with sketches of Shirdi landmarks, as they appeared at various points of time.

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has declared that the Shirdi *Avatar* was the first of a trilogy of Sai *Avatars*. The second of course is the current Sathya Sai *Avatar*, and the last would be the Prema Sai *Avatar*. Of the three, the Shirdi *Avatar* is the Prologue and the Prema Sai *Avatar* is the Epilogue to the Sri Sathya Sai *Poorna Avatar*. It has further been revealed that Shirdi Sai was an aspect of Shiva, Sathya Sai an aspect of both Shiva and Shakthi, while the yet-to-come Prema Sai would be an aspect of Shakthi alone. ▶

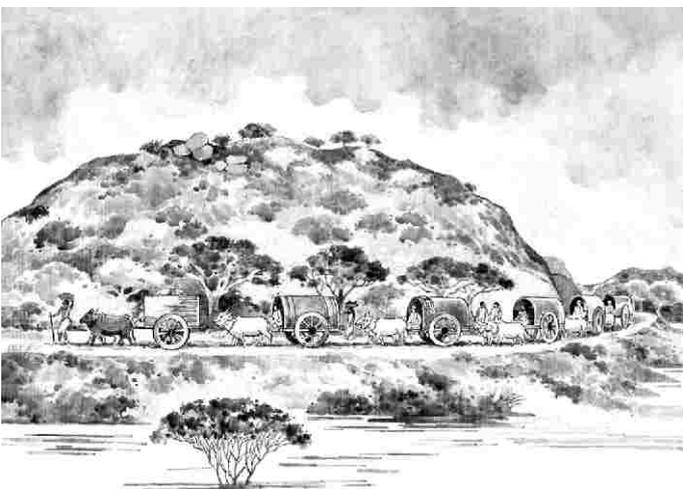




Bhagavan Baba has revealed that Shirdi Baba was born in early nineteenth century to a pious Brahmin couple in the village of Pathri in the erstwhile Nizam State. The Divine child was born following a boon granted by Lord Shiva and Parvathi to the mother, in appreciation of her deep devotion to God. Shortly before Baba took birth, the father left home for the forest to lead the life of a recluse. The lady followed her husband but could not keep pace, due to the advanced state of her pregnancy. Finally, she had to halt in order to deliver the baby. Once the baby was born, she reluctantly placed it under a tree and went in search of her husband. Soon there came near that tree a Muslim couple who picked up the child and brought it up. In 1842, the adopted father died and the adopted mother handed over charge of the young boy to one Gopal Rao, a rural chieftain. Gopal Rao is said to have placed Baba for some time under the care of a *Guru* known as Venkusa. Later Gopal Rao passed away, and Baba was now on His own. He wandered for some time and eventually made Shirdi His home.

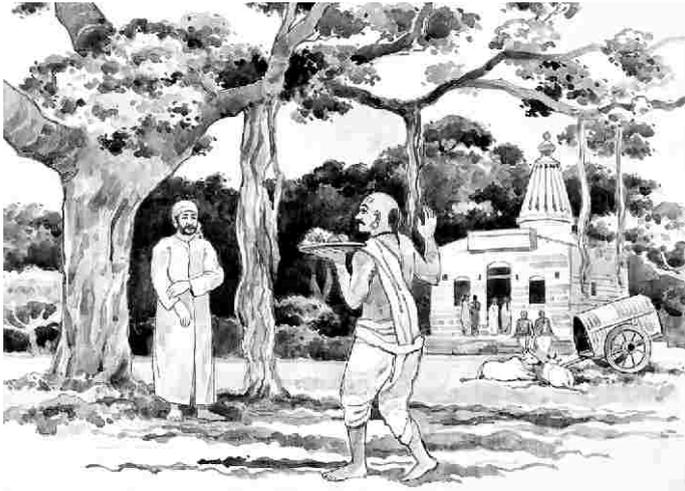


It is said that Baba came to Shirdi when He was about sixteen years of age. He wore a Kafni, the dress of a Muslim Fakir. He had no home of His own, and spent most of His time under a Neem tree that has since become a pilgrim spot known as *Gurusthan*. No one knew who this young man was, where He came from, and where He got His food. But this much every one knew: This mysterious young man definitely had a Divine Aura about Him, and was always most compassionate. Indeed, throughout His life, Baba's devotees knew very little about His early history. In the *Sai Sat Charita*, for example, one finds the remark: "Nobody knew the parents, details of the birth or the birth-place of Sai Baba. Many enquiries were made, many questions were put to Baba and others regarding these items, but no satisfactory answer or information has yet been obtained. Practically, we know nothing about these matters." Indeed, but for the enlightenment provided by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, this mystery would never have been cleared. Divinity often shrouds itself in mystery, and the mystery is removed only when the time and the circumstances are appropriate.



There lived in the village of Dhoop in Aurangabad District of Nizam State, a Muslim named Chand Patil. He was an officer of the Nizam State. Once while making a trip to Aurangabad, Chand Patil lost his mare that he loved very much. He searched for the mare for two long months, but could not find it. When returning from the fruitless search, Patil found a stranger under a tree, preparing to smoke a *Chilim* or native pipe. On seeing Patil go that way, this stranger accosted the tired merchant, invited him to share a smoke, and rest for a while. A conversation began and Chand Patil told the stranger who was none other than Baba, about the loss of his favourite mare. Baba asked Patil to look in a ravine nearby. Patil did so, and lo and behold, there was his lost mare! Amazed, Patil returned to Baba. Meanwhile, Baba wanted fire to light the *Chilim* and some water to wet the pipe, both of which Baba produced most casually with a miracle. Patil now believed that Baba was a saint and persuaded Him to go with him to Dhoop. Some years later, Patil came back Shirdi to celebrate a marriage in his family, and Baba returned with Patil. Thereafter Baba never left Shirdi.

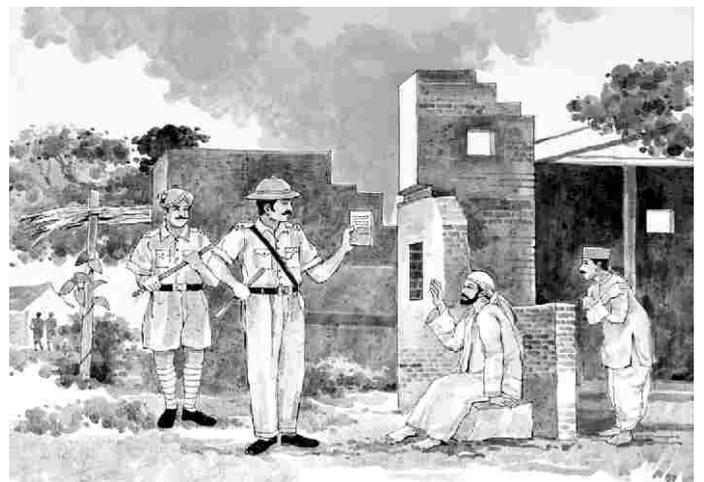
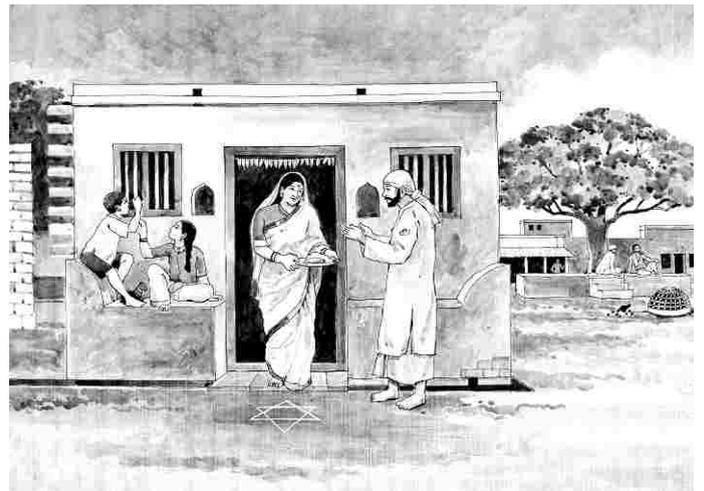
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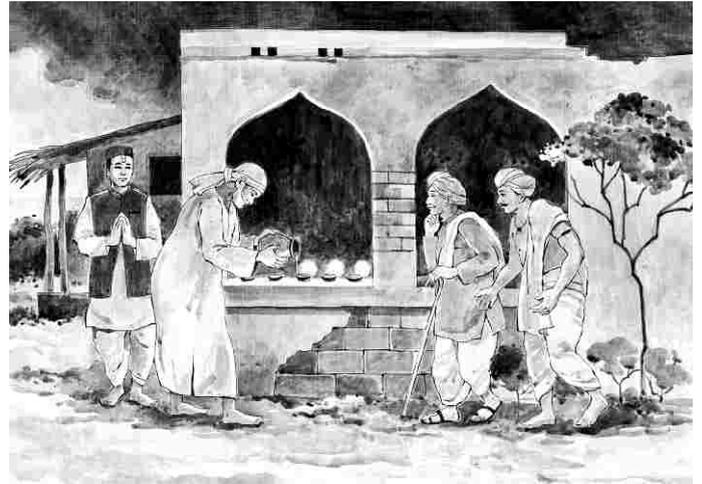
When Baba first came to Shirdi, people there out of respect, started calling Him Sai. When Chand Patil's marriage party arrived in Shirdi, the party alighted in the area near the Khandoba [Shiva] Temple there. The priest Mhalsapathi, recognised Baba and welcomed Him with the words *Ya Sai*, meaning "Welcome Saint!" When the wedding was over Chand Patil and his party returned to Dhoop but Baba settled down in Shirdi, choosing a dilapidated Mosque as His residence. Later, this Masjid as it was then known, became the famous Dwaraka Mai. In due course, Mhalsapathi became a close companion of Baba. For many years, Baba slept in the Masjid together with Mhalsapathi and another devotee named Tatya Kote Patil. They slept with their heads pointing towards the East, West and the North but feet touching together! If Tatya snored, as he did sometimes, Baba along with Mhalsapathi would turn Tatya over, rub his back and press his legs! Devotees wanting to worship Baba would offer sandal paste but no one dared to directly apply it on Baba. Mhalsapathi alone had the privilege of applying the paste on Baba's throat. Blessed are they who earn Divine intimacy.

Once there was a theft in the village, and the accused claimed in court that Baba had given him the stolen property. The Magistrate then issued a summons to Baba, asking Him to appear in Court and give evidence. When the summons was served, Baba threw it into the fire! The devotees were alarmed by this and afraid of the consequences. They therefore approached the Magistrate and explained that since Baba was a holy person, the issue of a summons was inappropriate. Instead, the Court could send an Officer to collect the required evidence. Accordingly, a Commissioner was sent to interview Baba. The Police Officer went to the Masjid and discovered that he was no match for Baba. For example, when asked His age, Baba replied, "Hundreds of thousands of years." When asked if He knew the accused, Baba replied that He knew everyone! When asked if He gave the jewels and if so, how they came into His possession, Baba replied, "Everything belongs to Me!" The Officer tried to remind Baba that this was an investigation by saying, "Here is a serious charge of theft" Baba cut the Officer short with the words, "What have I got to do with all this nonsense?" The conversation ended there and the Officer withdrew, having drawn a complete blank!

According to the scriptures, a Brahmachari and a Sannyasi have to live by begging. Both the Brahmachari and the Sannyasi are supposed to regard the whole Universe as their home, and all humans as belonging to the world-family. Baba resorted to seeking alms, perhaps to make His devotees see humanity as one large family. Every day Baba would go out with a tumbler in His hand and a Jholi or a bag strung round His shoulder, to just a few houses. In the tumbler He received cooked items and liquids, while in the Jholi He collected Bhakri or millet bread. He was content with what He received, and did not have any sense of taste. He was above the senses. The food collected would be put into wide-mouth earthen jar in the Masjid, from which even cows and crows were free to draw! The lady who swept the Masjid also took some Prasadam to her home. In the beginning, Baba did not follow this practice. He would just disappear into the forest and there, Bayjabai, a woman of great devotion would go out everyday seeking Baba, and offer some Bhakri to Him. Later Baba stopped going to the forest, and that was when He began seeking alms.



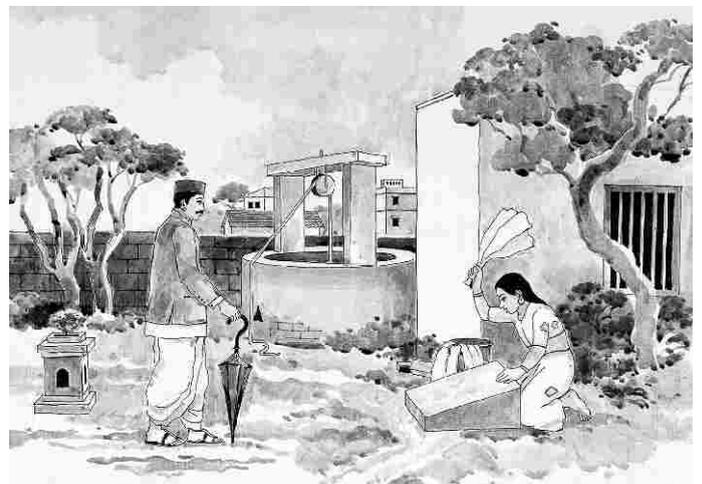
Baba was very fond of lighting lamps in the Masjid. In the early days, the oil for the lamps was offered free by the shop-keepers as a token of love, and Baba would go personally, tumbler in hand, and receive the oil from the merchants. He would then pour this oil into earthen lamps, using pieces of old cloth as wick. On the festival day of *Deepavali*, there would be extra lamps to celebrate the occasion. After some time, the grocers became tired of giving oil free to Baba and demanded payment. They obviously did not appreciate who Baba really was. Baba, naturally, was not going to pay, and He silently returned to the Masjid. In full view of the grocers, Baba first shook off the traces of oil in His tumbler, filled it with water, yes water, and then poured this water into the lamps, ready with wicks. Thereafter He lit the lamps, and wonder of wonders, the lamps all started burning; not only that, they kept burning all night. The shop-keepers realised their mistake, fell at Baba's feet and sought pardon. They at last understood that Baba was Divine.



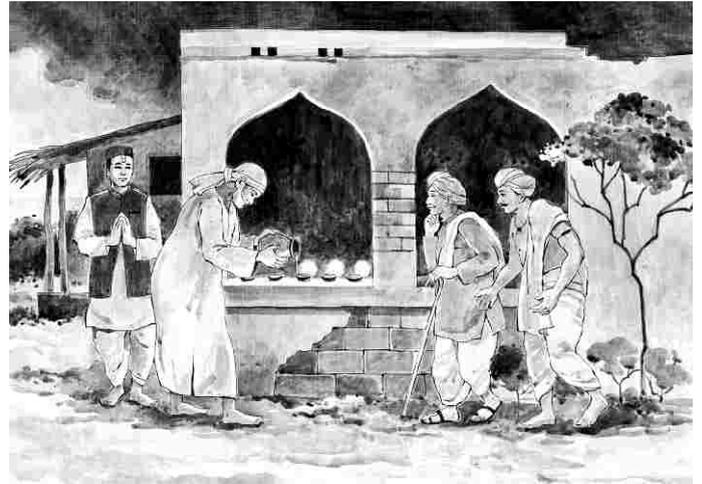
Baba taught lessons in the most unusual manner. Lakshmibai Shinde was an ardent devotee of Baba. Once, she made a nice dish for offering to Him. After that she left the kitchen for a short while, to attend to some work. Meanwhile a dog gained entry into the kitchen and helped itself to the tasty item. Seeing this, Lakshmibai angrily dealt a few blows to the dog with a stick. Cursing the dog, the lady made the dish afresh, took it to Baba and offered it to Him. Baba refused to accept, though He was known to like this dish very much. Puzzled, Lakshmibai asked Baba why He refused, and He replied that it was because she had chased Him away when He came to her house. Lakshmibai was astonished because Baba had not come to her house, and who would dream of chasing Him away? So she protested, whereupon Baba said: "I don't have to come in this particular form. I can come in any form. I came as a dog and what did you do? Did you not rain blows on Me?" Swami says that in this way, Shirdi Baba taught that He is Omnipresent, and that all forms are His.



To Das Ganu, a devotee of Baba, belongs the credit of popularising the name of Baba among the masses. In 1897, Baba started the celebration of the Rama Navami festival in Shirdi. In 1912, it was decided to include a *Harikatha* or a musical rendering of the story of the Lord, as a part of the annual celebration. In 1914, Baba entrusted the job to Das Ganu, who took this job most seriously. In fact, he went to various places singing the glory of Baba. Once, Das Ganu was grappling with the intricacies of the scriptures, and unable to find answers to his doubts, he sought Baba's guidance. Baba told him, "Go to Kaka Dikshit's house in Vile Parle (a suburb of Bombay). Kaka's maidservant will clear all your doubts". On the face of it, this is an extra-ordinary directive; yet, such was Das Ganu's faith in Baba that he did exactly as commanded. In Kaka Dikshit's house, Das Ganu saw that the servant, a young girl, was busy in her work but happily singing as if she did not have a care in the world. Das Ganu learnt then and there that contentment is the most precious gift one can ever get



As Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba often reminds us, the main purpose of the Sai *Avatar* is to draw the attention of mankind to the Divine Oneness that permeates Creation. The ancients knew this Truth but then, mankind also tends to quickly forget the Truth. And that is why, from time to time, the Lord has to incarnate, as Krishna explained to Arjuna. In the Shirdi *Avatar*, the Lord adopted a very novel strategy to promote the Spirit of Oneness. Baba conducted Himself in such a way that the Muslims thought He was a Muslim while the Hindus believed He was a Hindu. In the process, Baba drew both communities to Him. Thus, in 1897, Gopalrao Gund, got the idea of celebrating the Muslim festival of Urs. Together with other Hindu devotees like Taty Patil and Madhav Rao Shinde (Shyama), Gund got Baba's approval to celebrate the festival. Thereafter, the annual celebration of the Urs festival became a routine affair. Interestingly, it was celebrated on Rama Navami day, and naturally, it was the Muslims who took the leading part. From 1912, the Urs was combined with Rama Navami celebrations. In this manner, in many different ways, Baba drew not only Hindus and Muslims to Him, but also the Parsis, and even the English, who then ruled India.



Lakshmibai Shinde she was one of the very few ladies who was privileged to serve Baba. To Lakshmibai fell the honour of bringing food [*Bhakri* and milk] daily to Baba, at the appointed time. Others too would send food, but Baba would not touch any of it till Lakshmibai's offering came; He would patiently wait till then; such was His Love for Lakshmibai. When the end drew near, Baba called Lakshmibai to His side and affectionately gave her nine rupees. Lakshmibai was quite well to do. Why then did Baba give her money, and what was the significance? Lakshmibai did not understand but faithfully treasured the nine coins till the end of her life and never gave them away. Our beloved Swami has explained that Shirdi Baba gave Lakshmibai nine rupees to remind her that there are nine paths to reach God, the *Navarasa Bhakti Marga* of the scriptures. As Swami often recalls, these are *Sravanam* [listening to His Glory], *Keertanam* [singing His Glory], *Vishnu Smaranam* [chanting His Name], *Pada Sevanam* [service to the Lotus Feet], *Archanam* [ritual worship], *Vandanam* [offering salutations], *Dasyam* [being the servant of the Lord], *Sakhyam* [being the friend of the Lord], and *Atma Nivedanam* [surrendering to the Lord].



In the beginning, the Masjid was Baba's residence. Later, He adopted one more location, the *Chavadi*. In fact, one night He slept in the Masjid, and the next night He spent in the *Chavadi*. This alternation went on till the very end. From 1909, devotees began to offer regular worship to Baba in the *Chavadi*. The distance between the Masjid and the *Chavadi* was small; yet, Baba's journey from one residence to the other was quite an event. The book *Sai Sat Charita* describes in great detail Baba going in procession from the Masjid to the *Chavadi*. Baba would walk accompanied by Taty Patil and Mhalsapathi. While Patil walked on the right holding a lantern, Mhalsapathi on the left would be holding the hem of Baba's garment. Nana Nimonkar held the umbrella. In the procession would be Bhajan singers, and the crowd would raise the name of the Lord. There was a spot before the *Chavadi*, where Baba stood for a long time giving *Darshan*, His face glowing with extra-ordinary lustre. On reaching the *Chavadi*, *Aarathi* would be offered. The painting above is based on a famous photo taken during one of Baba's movement from one residence to the other.



Ganesha goes home

Today is Ganesha Immersion Day! Five days are past after Ganesh Chaturthi- and as tradition goes; *Ganpatibappa* (as we reverentially call Him) has to return home today. They say HE goes back to His heavenly abode at Kailash through the water route!

The last couple of days have been very hectic for the students and staff who were busy getting the ornate floats and pretty palanquins all set for the Big Day.

In these, they place Ganesha after the final worship and take Him in a grand procession to the Mandir.

Ganeshas of all sizes, from all over Puttaparthi, are brought by ardent worshippers to join this cavalcade of piety and gaiety.

At the Mandir, all the Ganeshas in their floats and palanquins, along with the students and staff, line up... a Guard of Honour, so that Swami can bless them all.

The Lord comes and moves between the lines...looking at each Ganesha...at each student...blessing them all.

As the Lord moves on, chants of prayer are heard...the *Ganesha Gayatri*...the voices soar and the entire place is charged with the Spirit!

Then the throngs break out singing...the *Ganesha Pancharatnam*. The Lord sways to the song. So does everyone.

We feel doubly blessed today. Both by Ganesha and His Father!

The procession then moves on from the Mandir ...to the shouts of *Jai* and Joy!

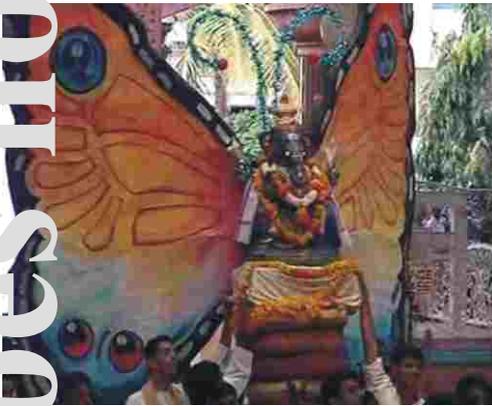
The Lord watches it all as He returns to His abode. Its time for us to return Ganesha to His!



Ganesha goes home



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Ganesha goes home

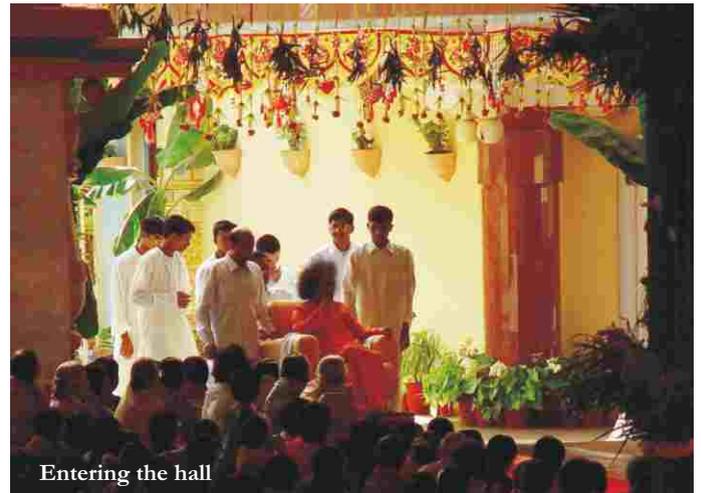
From Kerala with Love

Over the last two days, about a hundred buses, carrying thousands of people, arrived in the Ashram. Someone remarked that they were all from Kerala...here to celebrate their most important festival: Onam, today.

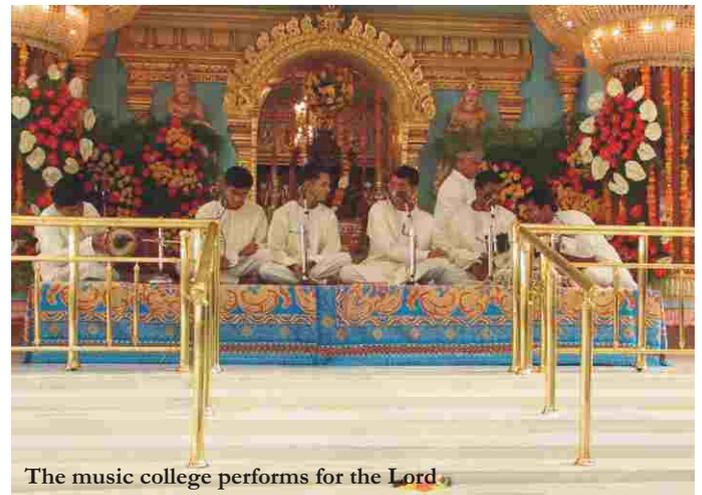
Swami came to the Kulwanth hall this morning. The place was decorated in typical Kerala style.....green leaves and colourful flowers all over... Melodious devotional songs were being sung. Welcoming Bhagavan were tiny tots with lamps in their hands. It felt like heaven....seeing the Lord in his chariot. He blessed everyone in the hall with his palms raised. There was thunderous applause all through.

This evening was even more special. Swami entered the hall in a beautiful 'chair car' and went straight to the stage. The students of the music college then presented a marvelous music programme. Swami then called the singers from Kerala to sing for Him...at the end of it, He looked immensely pleased. He even gave them vibhuthi. Seeing the beautiful face of Swami and listening to those melodious songs, all sense of time was lost.

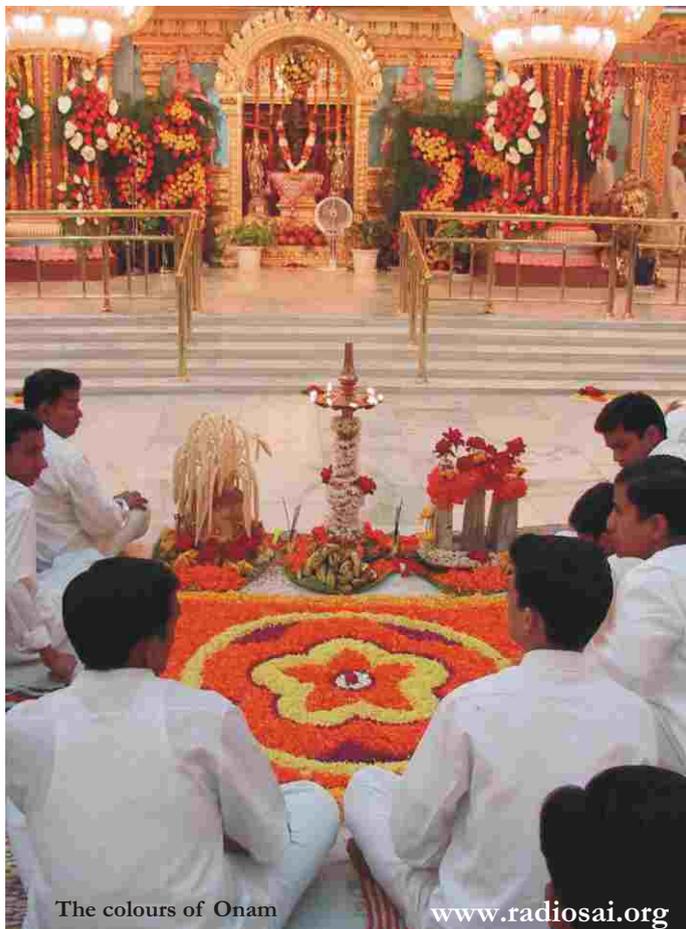
The buses are now returning back to where they came from.....there are faces peeping out of the windows...faces of contentment and bliss! They sure are taking back the Lord with them, in their hearts!



Entering the hall

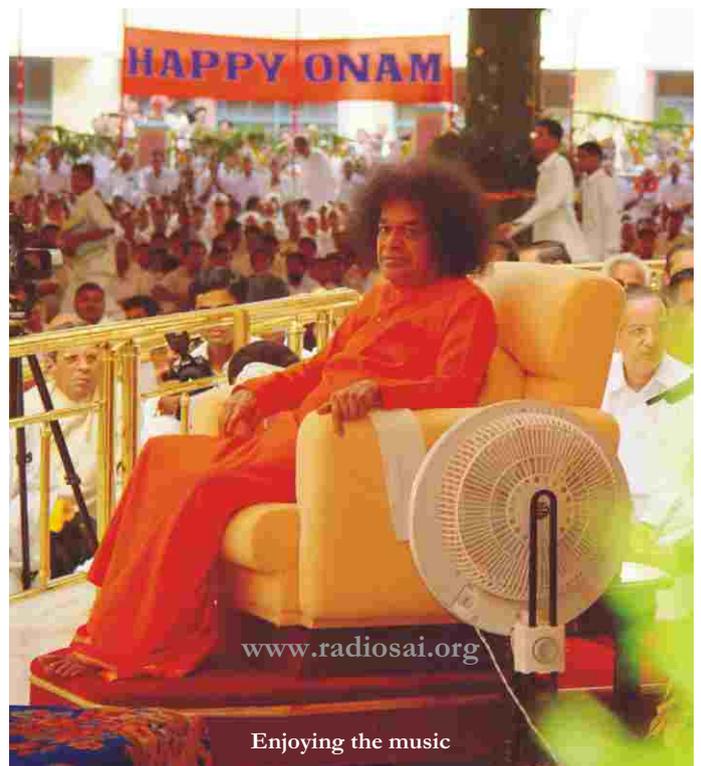


The music college performs for the Lord



The colours of Onam

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Enjoying the music

Continued from the previous issue...



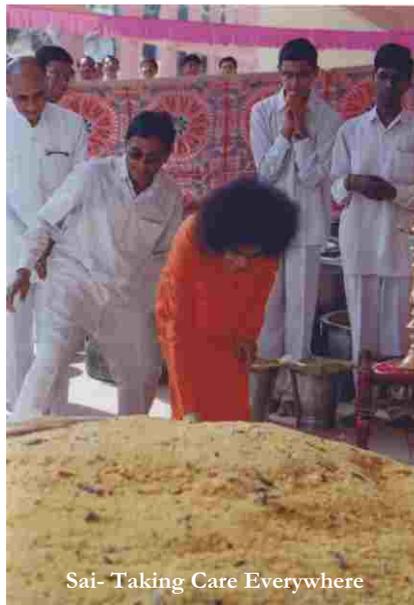
The Road Less Travelled

The moment the word 'Go' was given, Swami's teachers and the students swung into action. As always, very little time was available to get organised; but then, in His typical fashion, Swami made sure that **everything** went right, to drive home the point [once more!] that **He** is the real doer.

Statistics on paper hardly reveal much, impressive though they maybe. Yes, over two hundred villages and six hundred hamlets had to be served. About half a million food packets and *laddus* had to be distributed, and about a hundred thousand pieces of cloth had to be given to the poor and destitute in the villages. But how was one to get to these villages in the first place, especially when were hardly any motorable roads? How were estimates of the population in those villages to be obtained when even Public Administration for villages made ad hoc estimates? Where was the food to be cooked? Who would do the packing and who would organise the distribution? There were many pertinent and not so pliable puzzles. But nobody had any time even to think about these! There was no need to either. They were all taken care of by the Master, as He went about, executing His Master plan.

Everything got organised with lightning speed as always happens when Swami runs the show. All

questions suddenly stumbled upon their answers, as if by magic! Collection of statistics, sorting the clothes and readying them for distribution, the cooking, and the packing - tough though all these were, they actually formed the easy part. More difficult was the preparation of maps [hardly anything existed to start with], route planning, lining up the vehicles for distribution, and, above all the logistic planning. Experts in Information Technology talk of paperless office. Here was a massive project literally done without any pieces of paper or memos sent from anyone to anyone! The plain fact was that Swami gave absolutely no time for all this.

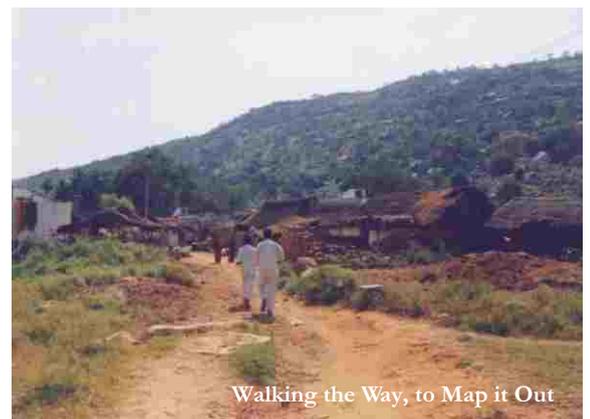


Sai- Taking Care Everywhere

God's work is never easy, and what was feared came true; there were no maps available to get to the villages! So parties were hurriedly sent in advance to scout all the areas to be covered, and monitor all the so-called roads/mud tracks to be taken. Based on the information gathered, route maps were hurriedly prepared and photocopies made. The volunteers were organised into groups, each group servicing a set of nearby villages. Team-leaders and co-ordinators were

identified by the senior teachers, and detailed briefing was given to them every evening. Over a dozen trucks were commandeered and a few tractor-trailers as well. Portable wireless sets were procured and fitted to the trucks. In addition, several people were given walkie-talkies so that they could communicate with each other and also the mobile units. As if all this was not enough, a control room was set up in Prasanthi Nilayam and a mobile repeater wireless outpost was arranged to be erected each day in one central location in the distribution area to provide anchorage and communication assistance.

The action began on October 31st at the Pedda Venkama Raju Kalyana Mandapam [the *Paatba Mandiram* of the pre-1950 days]. It was the first day of *GRAMA SEVA*. In keeping with the popular adage, charity was to begin at home. Swami had decided that the Grama Seva should be first done at Puttaparthi. In the morning, after Swami came out for *Darshan*, all the boys and teachers rose and went around the Mandir chanting *Vedas* and singing *Bhajans* while Swami stood on the veranda smiling, watching, and showering His Divine Grace. The procession streamed out of the Sai Kulwant Hall to reassemble at the Kalyana Mandapam. From there, all the teachers and students went in a procession, singing *Bhajans*, to the Siva temple that now marks the birth place of Swami. The procession then wound its way back to the Kalyana Mandapam for the formal

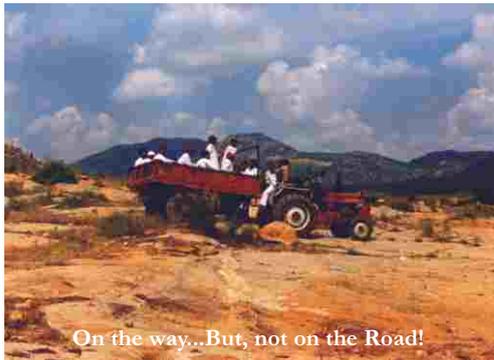


Walking the Way, to Map it Out

Touching Thousands of Hearts



They March Out for Sai's work



On the way...But, not on the Road!

commencement of the distribution. Meanwhile, Swami the ever-anxious Mother, came to the Kalyana Mandapam to see if everything was alright - the human-aspect of the Living God!



All set...to begin

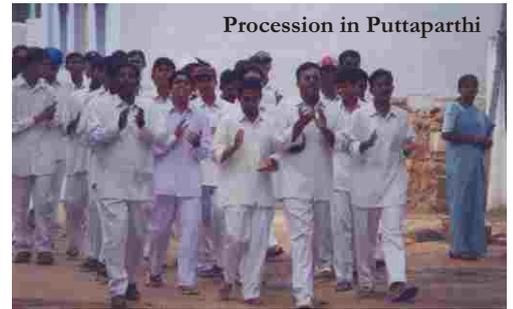
The compound of the Kalyana Mandapam was teeming with the poor and the destitute of Puttaparthi, who were then given sweets, food and clothes by the people assigned for duty there. Others fanned out in various directions, moving through the town distributing food and sweets from house to house, to each and every member of the family, irrespective of whether the persons were poor or rich. The students and teachers went not only to the

residences but also to the shops, telephone booths, bus stand, street vendors, and the various hutment colonies. No one was left out. Everywhere, with a smile, the boys said, "Sai Ram. We are privileged to offer to you these sweets and food which come with Love, Blessings and the Grace of Bhagavan Baba."

For everyone, it was a new experience, somewhat tiring but very rewarding nevertheless. Swami came out early for *Darshan* that afternoon. Some of the teachers and students had returned but many were still to come back. Soon they also trudged in, bushed, but beaming with satisfaction. But Swami was not very happy. Why? Because many boys had not eaten lunch. They were busy doing service, and after that rushed for *Darshan*. So, we got strict instructions, "From tomorrow, all of you will eat promptly at 11.30 A.M. No exceptions and no excuses. You may suspend service for a while to have lunch. After eating, you may resume service!" Words from a concerned Mother, to Her children.

Day One was a mere curtain-raiser. After all, Puttaparthi was home and there were no serious problems with roads, maps, or even logistics. Day two would prove a lot tougher. And so would every other day, as one went farther and farther, into more remote villages. But it also promised to be more exciting and challenging.

To be continued...



Procession in Puttaparthi



Door to Door...Heart to Heart



Reaching out, for a Gift of Love



Love Beyond all barriers

God has to be worshipped by us and realized through nature. Nature is the name for all those things that impress upon us the Splendour of God. It is called *Maya* too, which hides as well as reveals God's beauty and majesty. You must learn to use nature, not for your own comfort or entanglement in forgetfulness of God, but for the better understanding of the Intelligence that guides the Universe.



Baba

If

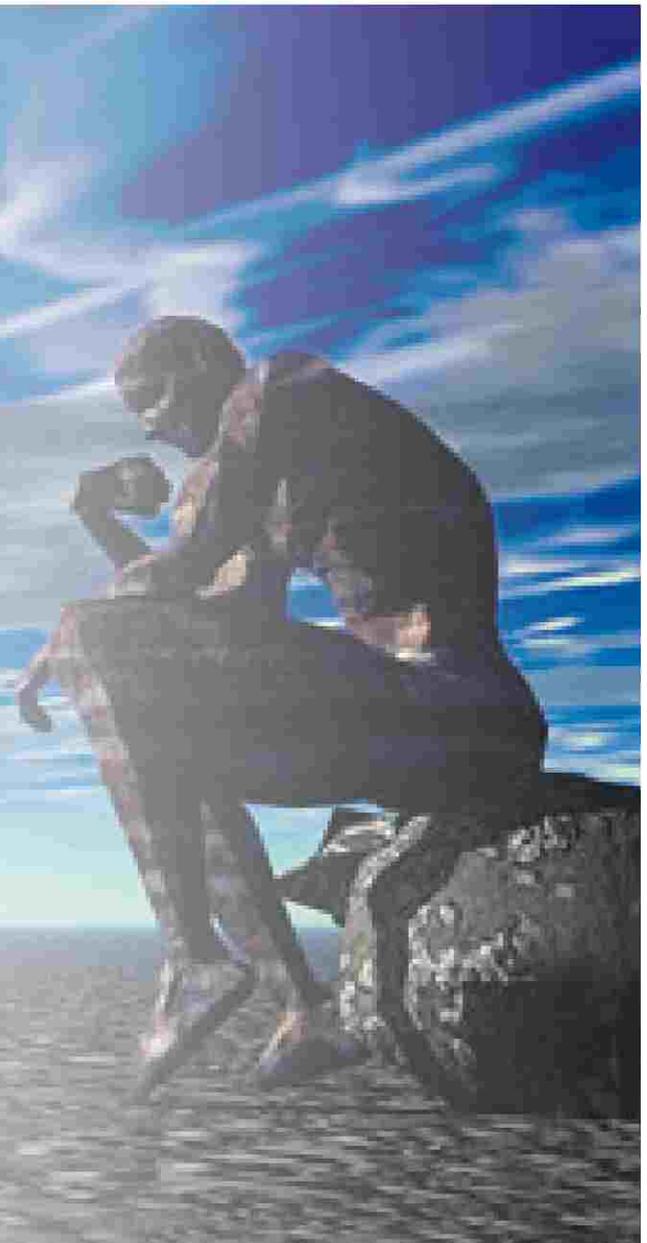
If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream -- and not make dreams your master;
If you can think -- and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two imposters just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools;

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on!"

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with kings -- nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run --
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And -- which is more -- you'll be a Man, my son!

-Rudyard Kipling



Celebration

"What would spirituality give me?" said an alcoholic to the Master.

"Spirit-free intoxication." was the answer.

Greatness

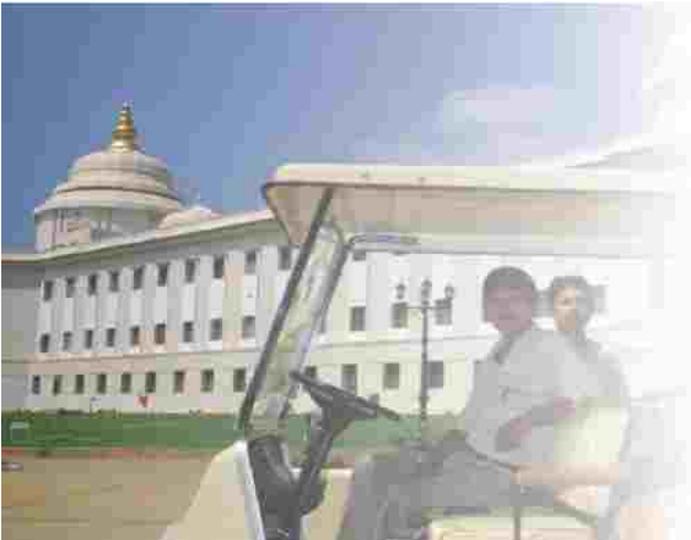
"How can I be a great man-like you?"
"Why be a great man?" said the Master. "Being a man is a great enough achievement."

Anthony de Mello, SJ, One Minute Wisdom



Hospital Corner

Satistics

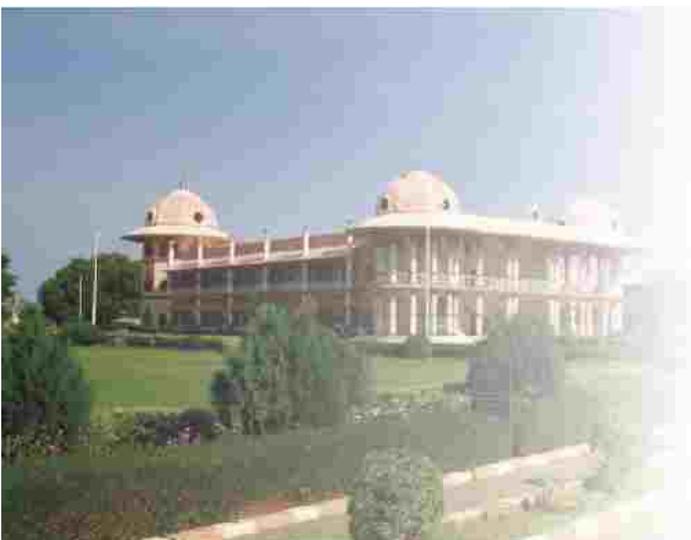


Bangalore Super Speciality Hospital

Cardiac Surgeries:	3686
Cardiac Catheterisation:	6109
Neuro Surgeries:	2964
CT Scans:	10724
MRI Exams:	11591

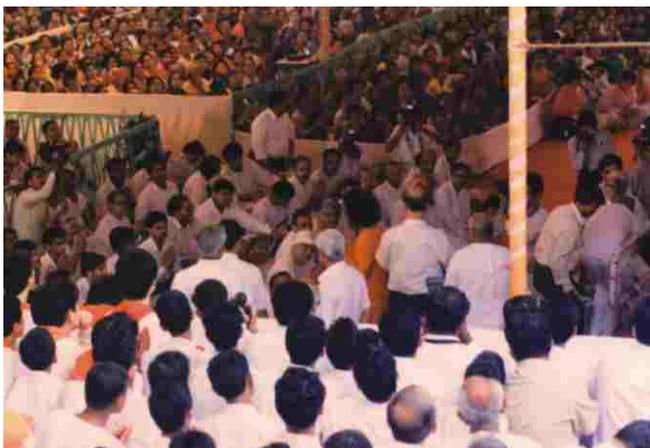
Puttaparthi Super Speciality Hospital

Heart Surgeries:	13313
Cath Procedures:	13143
Urology Surgeries:	20833
Ophthalmology Surgeries:	21665
CT Scans :	3508





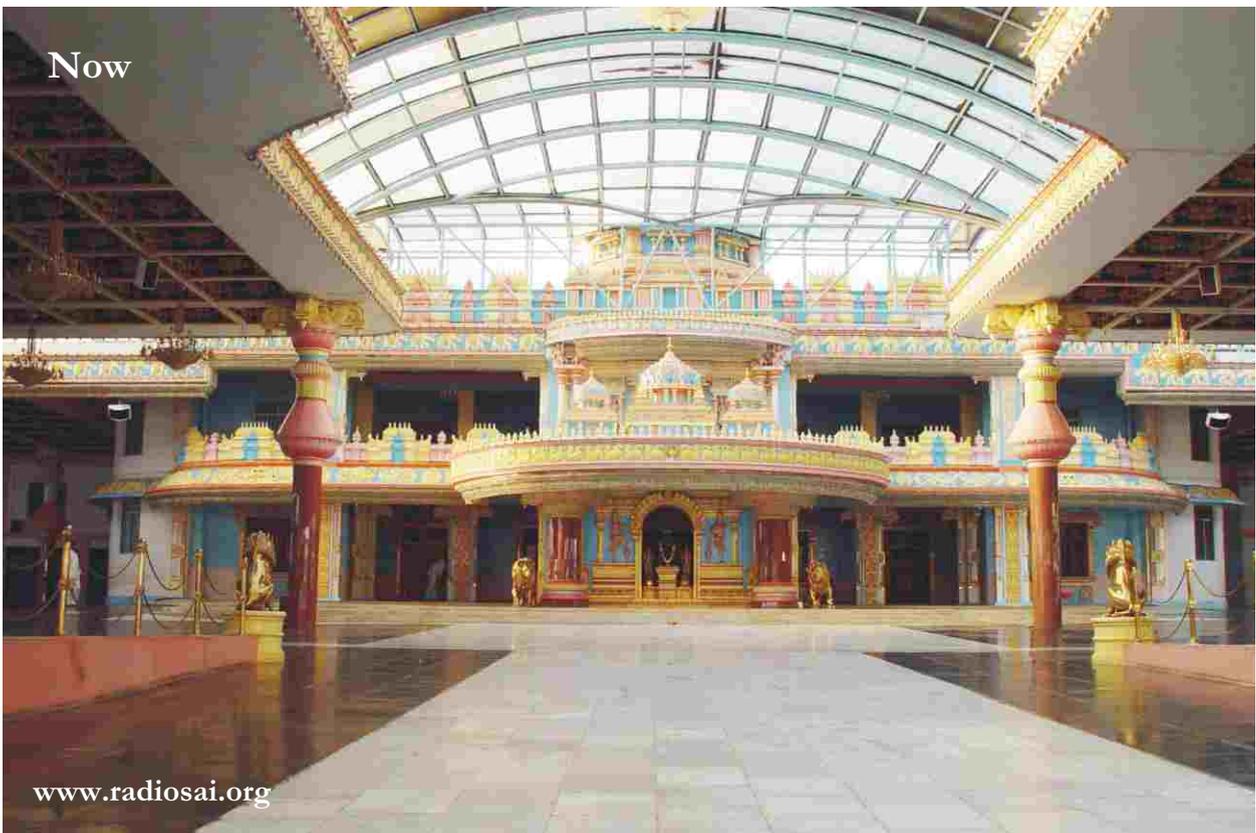
These are special moments etched in the memory of a city. Heart to Heart brings you a pictorial memoir of Swami's visits to Dharmakshetra, Mumbai.

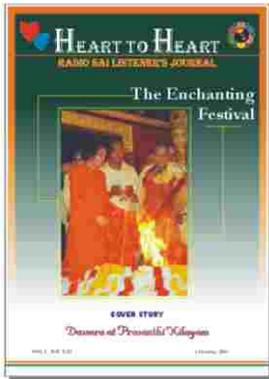


Then



Now





FROM YOUR HEART!

Just take a moment to tell us what you feel about Heart2Heart.

How do you like this journal? Very Informative Informative OK

Which section do you like most? Give rankings

- Between You and Us
- Spiritual Blossoms
- Cover Story
- Moments, Memories and Miracles
- Musings from Prashanthi Nilayam
- The Shirdi Story
- Prashanthi Diary
- Window to Sai Seva
- Kindle Your Spirit
- Down Memory Lane
- Hospital Corner

In what way will this journal help you? Fill in the gap provided.

- Self-improvement.....
- Study circle.....
- Service
- Bal Vikas work.....
- Youth activity.....
- Family relationship.....
- Other.....

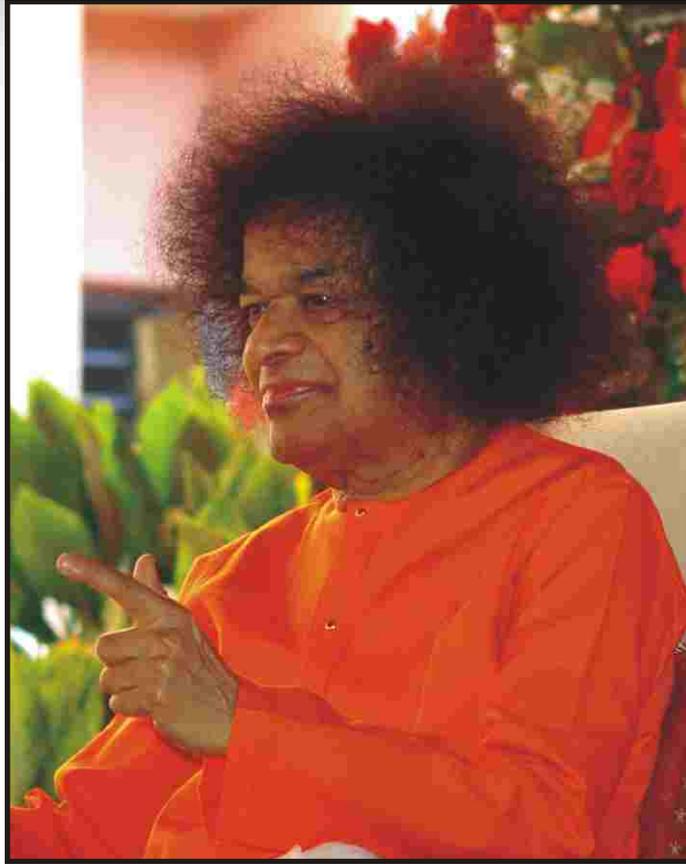
What improvements and additions would you like?

.....
.....

Please fill in your details

- Name :
- Email id :
- Occupation :
- City/town :
- Country :

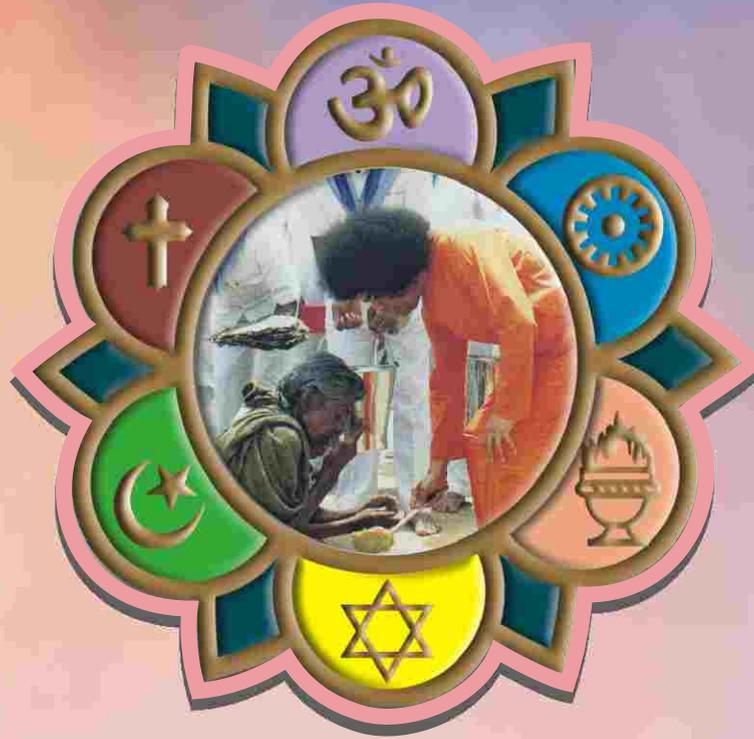
SORRY WE DO NOT HAVE A SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE !



I am always ready to help you and to serve you. You may belong to any village or any district or even any state for that matter.

I do not have any feeling of difference - religious, regional or national. I do not go by the position of people nor the place to which they belong. All are the same to me and I serve all equally.

-Baba, 11th October, 1997



LOVE ALL SERVE ALL