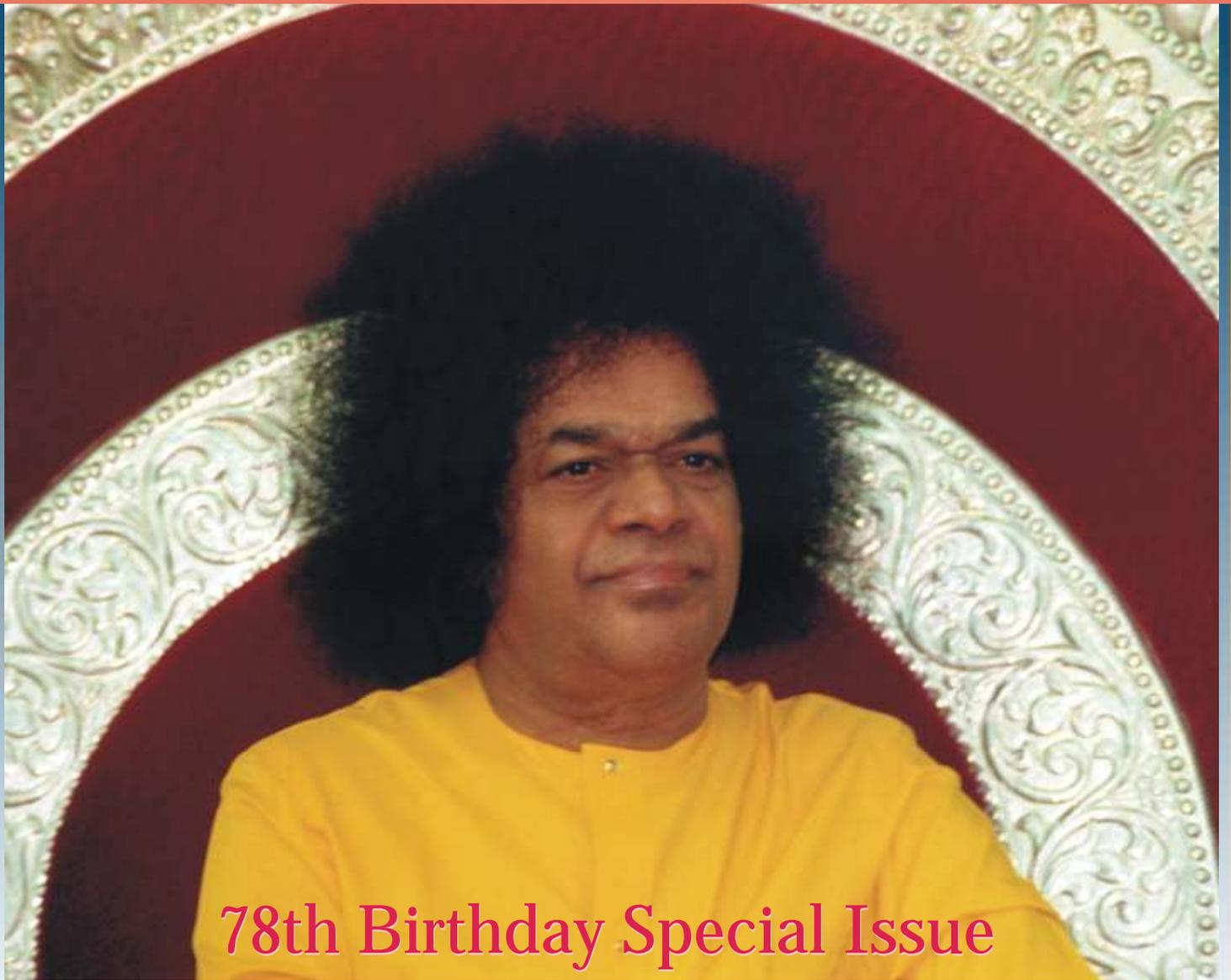




HEART TO hEART



RADIO SAI LISTENER'S JOURNAL



78th Birthday Special Issue

COVER STORY

The Satya Sai Story

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PRANAMS AT THE LOTUS FEET

Journal

developed by

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Between YOU and US

Dear Reader,

Sai Ram, and a very special greeting to each and everyone of you in the Radio Sai Club. Our job is to spread Ananda, and we have some real GOOD NEWS for you. Very shortly, for your listening pleasure, we would be bringing you the proceedings of the Birthday festivities, especially those on 22nd November and 23rd November, within a few hours of those momentous happenings. Just imagine, within a few hours, devotees everywhere, from California to Fiji, would be able to hear the Golden Voice of our Beloved Swami, giving His benedictory Message on the occasion of the Institute Convocation and also His Birthday Message mind you, not a print version but the actual voice, yes, our Beloved Master's Voice! All this would come to you via the Worldspace services on the one hand and Internet streaming on the other. No one anywhere would be left out!

And to put you in the Birthday mood we offer this special issue, a Birthday gift shall we say? A tremendous amount of effort has gone into producing this special and we would just love to hear from you what you think. So please, why don't you take a few moments off and give us your valuable feedback?

Like the previous issue, even in this issue we have dispensed with regular features. They will come back to you next fortnight.

It is always such a pleasure to serve you all, and we express our gratitude to Bhagavan for giving this opportunity. God Bless. Jai Sai Ram.

SGH TEAM

For the Birthday Special

Welcome to this special issue of Heart to Heart, offered in celebration of the 78th Birthday of our Dear Lord Sai.

How does one do justice to the Infinite One, infinite in every respect, especially in His Incomparable Prema? One just cannot; it is absolutely impossible! Yet, even as the tiny squirrel attempted to show its Love to Lord Rama, we have endeavoured to make a small offering in the same spirit, and it is with similar feelings that we bring this special issue to you. Swami reminds us that one does not have to taste a whole mound of sugar to experience the sweetness of sugar; tasting one teaspoonful would do. Yes, though His Story is Infinite and Endless, we believe even a few glimpses of His Uniqueness and Prema, would be enough to make you all happy on His Birthday, wherever you are.

We are conscious of the fact that in preparing this volume we have had to leave out many wonderful things. But don't worry, what we have missed out now, we will offer in future issues. Meanwhile, may we with much love, invite you to partake of this slice of His Sweetness?



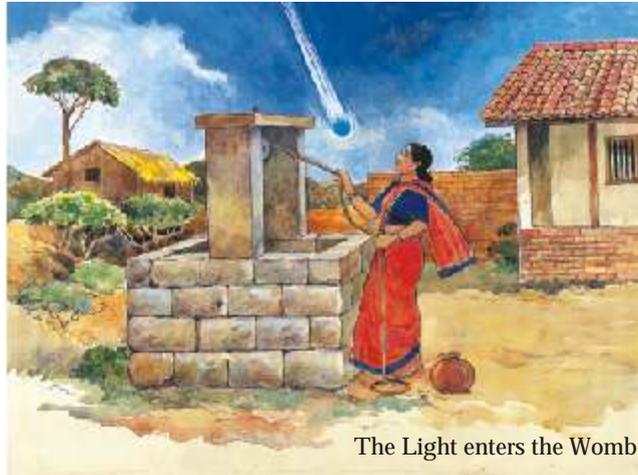
The Sathya Sai Story

November 23, 1926, is a red-lettered day in the history of mankind. On that day was born in the (then) obscure village of Puttaparthi, a charming young baby boy in the Ratnakara family. None realised then, and indeed for a long time thereafter, that Divinity had incarnated in human form as Ratnakara Venkata Satyanarayana Raju, grandson of Kondama Raju, and son of Pedda Venkama Raju and Easwaramma.

The birth of ordinary mortals is the direct consequence of earlier lives. The *Karma* or the track-record of earlier births, i.e., the nature of deeds performed, both good and bad, determine the future *Janmas* or births. In short, human birth is a *Karma Janma* (birth that is the consequence of earlier births). However, when the Lord comes down in human form, it is a different story altogether. He incarnates as a part of His unfathomable Cosmic Drama, to play as it were, a cameo role. He decides the time and the place of His incarnation, the parents, and also how His life would unfold. Thus the Lord's birth as a human is a part of His Divine Sport or *Leela*; in other words, His life is a *Leela Janma*.

In the Sathya Sai Incarnation, the Lord chose the Ratnakara family on account of the purity, the piety, and the devotion of its members. Prior to the incarnation, Pedda Venkama Raju and Easwaramma had been blessed with one son and two daughters Seshama Raju, Venkamma, and Parvathamma, in that order. Some years passed and Mother Easwaramma longed for another son. She observed all the prescribed austerities and soon her prayers were answered she was to become a mother again. Even before its birth, Easwaramma

knew that the child to be born would be unusual. There was a definite reason for



The Light enters the Womb

such a belief.

Sometime prior to the birth of Swami, Lakshamma, the mother-in-law was engaged in the worship of Lord Sathyanarayana. The Lord then appeared in Lakshamma's dream and blessed her, indicating that He would be born in her family. Promptly, Lakshamma alerted Easwaramma that the latter might have strange experiences but ought not to worry about them. Shortly thereafter, Easwaramma had precisely one such experience.

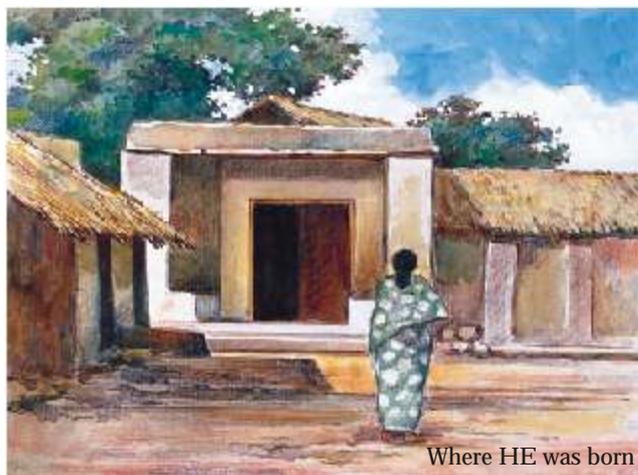
One day as she was drawing water from the well, Easwaramma was startled by

ball came directly towards her and entered her; Easwaramma fainted and fell. The Lord had entered her womb for the mandatory stay prior to physical birth as Sathyanarayana Raju. Thus the Lord was not begotten but immaculately conceived, even as His Son had been, two thousand years ago.

Sathya was born in the early hours of November 23, 1926. There were any number of unusual incidents accompanying His birth, as also in His childhood (as in the case of Krishna). Though they all gave strong hints of about

His Divinity, few realised until much later that Sathya was the Lord Himself. But all unfailingly recognised that Sathya was most unusual, extraordinarily intelligent, precocious, and above all, always full of Love and compassion.

In Primary School, Sathya helped His classmates in diverse ways. Though Himself from a poor family, He did not hesitate to give away His clothes to needy mates. More important, He never lost an opportunity to turn the minds of His friends towards God. Among other things, He formed a *Bhajan* group for this purpose, which later became very popular.



Where HE was born

the sight of a big blue ball of light. The

It was time to move on to Higher Secondary School but such a school was available only in Bukkapatnam, several kilometers to the north of Puttaparthi. Young Sathya now had to trudge back and forth every day, no matter what the weather, crossing fields, walking on bunds, and wading through water, as required. In the Bukkapatnam School also, He was a model student, ever helpful to others. Making students God-conscious remained His prime occupation, and to hold the attention of His mates,

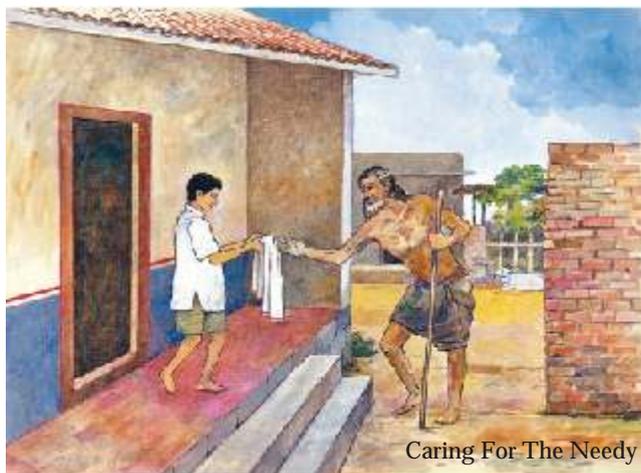
The Sathya Sai Story

He would often materialise *Prasaadam*, much to their amazement.

Sathya was an automatic choice for the class-leader (Monitor), but this brought its share of problems. Once, His teacher asked Sathya to slap all the boys in the class for some infringement of discipline. Instead of slapping hard as he was expected to, Sathya merely patted the cheeks of the errant pupils. This greatly angered the teacher, who then directed all his wrath on the class-leader. Sathya bore the punishment in stoic silence; for Him, it was all a part of the Drama scripted by Him, and this particular scene was being enacted to impart some lessons to humanity.

On another occasion, the teacher handling a particular class-hour (period) noticed that Sathya was not writing down what was being dictated, while all other students did. When questioned, Sathya replied that He was not taking down because He already knew that lesson. Interpreting the response as gross impertinence, the teacher asked Sathya to stand up on the bench, a form of punishment popular in those days. Sathya obediently did. After a while the School bell rang, signalling the end of the period in progress, and the commencement of a new period. It was time for the teacher to leave the room and make way for another one who was to handle the next period. Mr. Mahboob Khan, this other teacher, entered the classroom and to his utter surprise saw Sathya standing upon the bench. Khan loved Sathya very much, and to him it was inconceivable that Sathya would have done anything to deserve a punishment. He also noticed that the teacher who had handled the previous period was not vacating the chair. To his astonishment he then discovered that this teacher was not getting up from the chair because he was stuck or glued to it

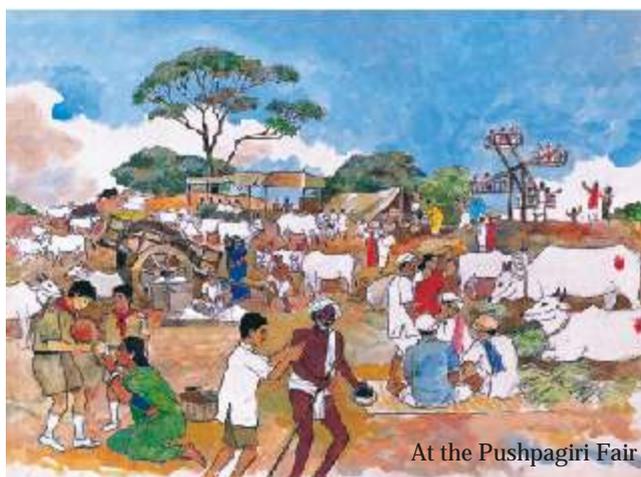
whenever the teacher tried to get up, the chair also lifted! In a flash Khan understood the problem. He asked Sathya to get down from the bench and



Caring For The Needy

the stuck teacher promptly got his release! Years later Swami disclosed that this drama was staged not to inflict humiliation on the teacher concerned but to make people conscious of His Divine powers. Humiliation is something that does not exist in Swami's dictionary.

Around this time, Seshama Raju went to Kamalapuram to stay with his in-laws, and also qualify there as a teacher. Kamalapuram boasted of a good school and Seshama Raju thought that this was the school where Sathya ought to study the entire family pinned its hope on Sathya, and dreamt that one day He would go to college and eventually end up as a big officer in the



At the Pushpagiri Fair

Government. And so to Kamalapuram, Sathya went.

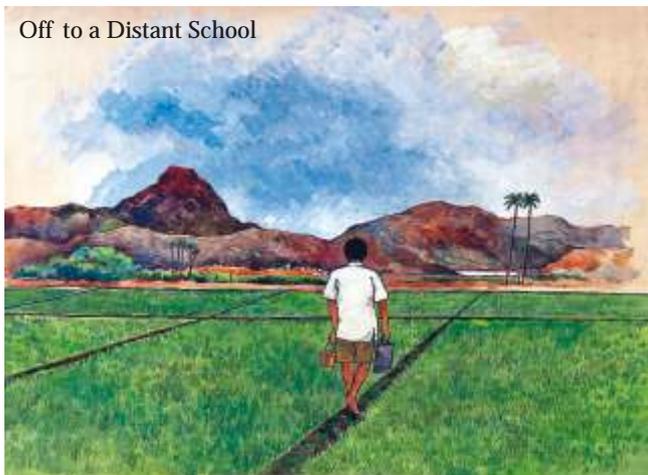
Seshma Raju's in-laws being relatively well-off, looked down upon Sathya since He was quite poor. As a result, He was not only ill-treated but also called upon to perform arduous house-hold duties. He had, for example, to fetch drinking water everyday from a far-off well. Such chores left scars, which remain to this day.

In the Kamalapuram School, Sathya was a great favourite of the Drill Master who doubled also as the Scout Master. Once, there was to be a grand General Fair-cum Cattle Show in the neighbouring village of Pushpagiri. The Scout Master wanted his troop to go Pushpagiri and render service of the type scouts were expected to. A subscription of ten rupees was collected from each boy for meeting the various expenses connected with the trip, including the bus fare. Not having the required amount, Sathya excused Himself from joining the group but assured the Scout Master that He would somehow or the other be in Pushpagiri at the appointed time for duty. While His friends went by bus, Sathya walked the entire distance, with little to eat on the way. When He finally reached Pushpagiri, He was very tired but did not flinch from discharging His duties. Just before returning, He thoughtfully

bought a few small gifts for folks back home. When He returned, what greeted Him was not appreciation for the gifts but a severe punishment because His absence had created problems with the supply of drinking water. Much later Swami revealed that He deliberately created such painful situations for Himself in order to teach the lesson of forbearance and equanimity. Despite the harsh treatment constantly administered, Swami has never ever criticised either His elder brother or His sister-in-law,

The Sathya Sai Story

Off to a Distant School



maintaining always that they were but mere instruments in His Drama, with specific roles to play.

His teacher's training concluded, Seshama Raju moved from Kamalapuram to Uravakonda to take appointment as a Telugu teacher in a school there. Sathya went along and joined that school. Once again He excelled in everything, and became the cynosure of all eyes. But once He was back at home, it was the same painful routine; no let-up at all.

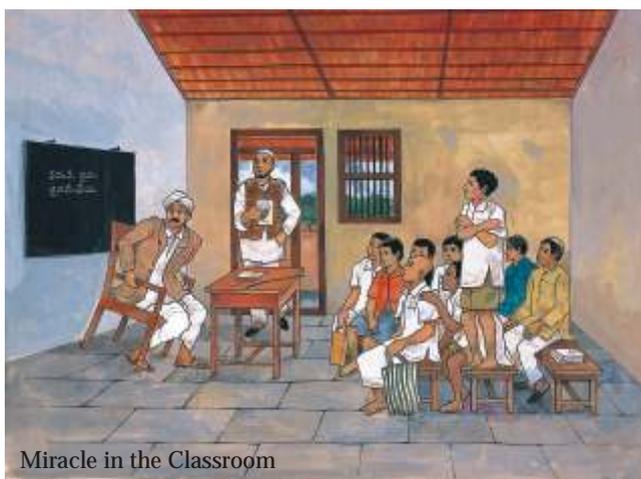
March 1940 marked a turning point. Sathya was allegedly stung one day by a scorpion, found in plenty in Uravakonda. His health became impaired and the village medics were consulted but it did not help. Sathya's behaviour also appeared to undergo a change, and He became an enigma to all. Convinced that Sathya had come under the spell of evil spirits, all sorts of quack remedies were tried but they were of no avail. An exorciser was summoned but before he could get started, he heard a mysterious voice warning him; obeying the warning he promptly withdrew. Meanwhile, a frantic message was sent to Sathya's parents in Puttaparthi, and they both rushed to Uravakonda consumed with anxiety.

Everyone was puzzled since Sathya was no longer the ideal and model

schoolboy of the standard type. He was remote, withdrawn, and indifferent to worldly matters. If He spoke, which was rarely, it was always on spiritual matters. At times He would burst into non-stop recitation of Vedic hymns He had never learnt. On matters philosophical and spiritual, He dared even to correct elders, a c k n o w l e d g e d

experts, and scholars, something He was never known to do before.

Sathya was then taken to other places

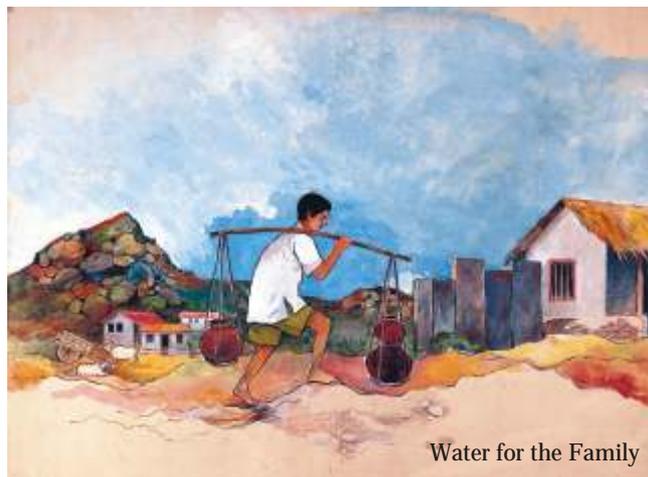


Miracle in the Classroom

like Bellary and Dharmavaram for treatment but there was no improvement. One more attempt was made and this time He was taken to an exorciser in Kadri, a mean and cruel person. Here, young Sathya was put through incredible physical torture, unimaginable even in the proverbial Hell. The witch-doctor was verily an agent of death, and when his atrocities mounted, Sathya was whisked away back to home in Puttaparthi.

Days and weeks passed, and Sathya continued to be "abnormal". Came May 23, 1940, and with it a revelation. That morning Sathya was in a good mood, materialising flowers and sugar candy in plenty, and distributing them to all those who called on Him. Father Venkama Raju heard about this but was neither pleased nor amused. Suspecting trickery, he armed himself with a big stick, approached Sathya, and asked, "Who are You? Are You God, ghost, or Devil?" The big moment had arrived and Sathya calmly replied, "I am Sai." The stick slowly slipped out of Venkama Raju's hand but he still remained puzzled. And so he asked: "What are we to do with You?" Sathya replied, "Worship Me." The father's next question was, "When?" Came the answer: "Every Thursday." That was when the worship of Sathya Sai first commenced.

One Thursday, someone challenged: "If You are Sai Baba, show us some proof." Sathya then asked for some flowers. A bunch of jasmine flowers were given to Him. He threw them on the floor; instead of falling randomly, they got neatly arranged to form the words SAI BABA in Telugu. Such revelations notwithstanding, Sathya was forced to return to Uravakonda and resume school.



Water for the Family

The Sathya Sai Story

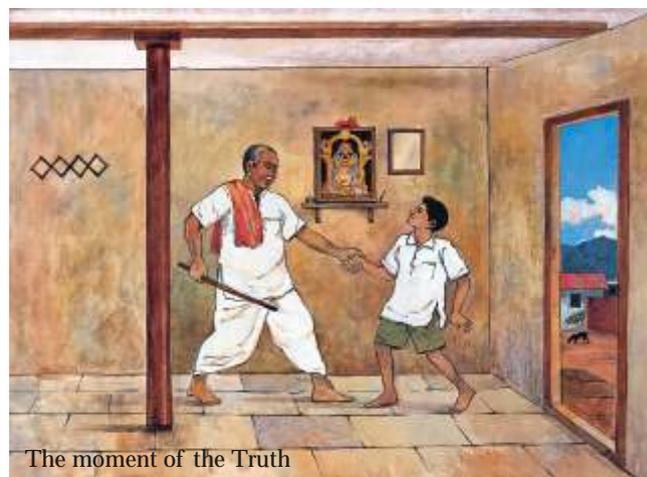
Looking back, one can see that starting from the very beginning and particularly from March 1940, Sathya had been gradually setting the stage for what was soon to follow. Right from the time He was a little boy, He had, constantly and consistently, displayed the Divine qualities of compassion, sacrifice, forbearance, and selfless Love. Occasionally, He performed miracles to drop hints that He was indeed far beyond the normal. Repeatedly He demonstrated His ability to absorb enormous cruelty and physical punishment without any trace of hatred or rancour towards those ill-treating Him. And last but not the least, He constantly diverted the attention of one and all from the mundane to the Divine.

Came finally the day to snap all worldly ties and launch the Mission He had incarnated for. October 20, 1940 was that day. In the morning of that day, Sathya left for school as usual but within minutes He was back home. Standing on the doorstep, He flung aside the bag containing books and in ringing tones declared, "I am no longer your Sathya. I am Sai. I don't belong to you. I have My work. My devotees are calling Me. I am going. I can no longer stay here." Walking up to a neighbour's house, He sat on a rock in the middle of the garden there while people flocked,

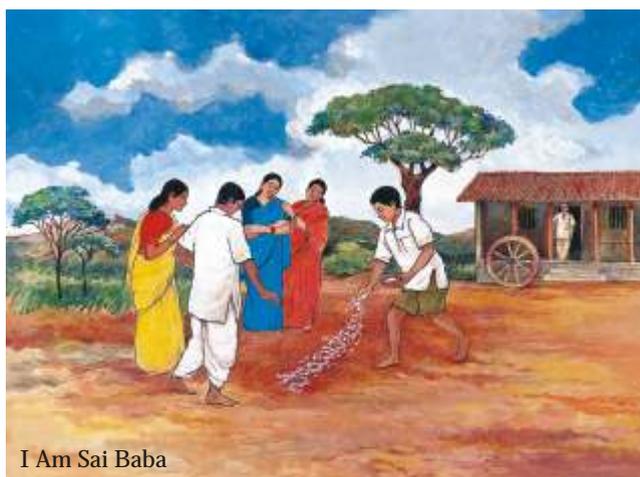
bringing flowers. And then, most lovingly and compassionately Sri Sathya Sai Baba led the congregation in a *Bhajan* that has now become very familiar to us. He sang:

Manasa bhajare Gurucharanam, Dustara bhavasagara tharanam.

O mind! Meditate on the Lotus Feet of the Lord! That alone will help you to sail across the turbulent sea called life.



procession. *En route*, He was joyfully welcomed and worshipped in all the villages that He passed through. Back in Puttaparthi He stayed with His parents for a few days and then shifted to the house of a pious lady named Subbamma, who always had abiding faith in the Divinity of Sathya Sai. Soon, Subbamma's unostentatious abode became a pilgrim centre. They came in large numbers to worship Sai, and patiently and tirelessly, Subbamma played hostess to them all. The crowds kept growing bigger and bigger and a new residence had to be found for Sai. In 1944, Baba moved to a thatched hut in a vacant plot of land nearby. The plot was

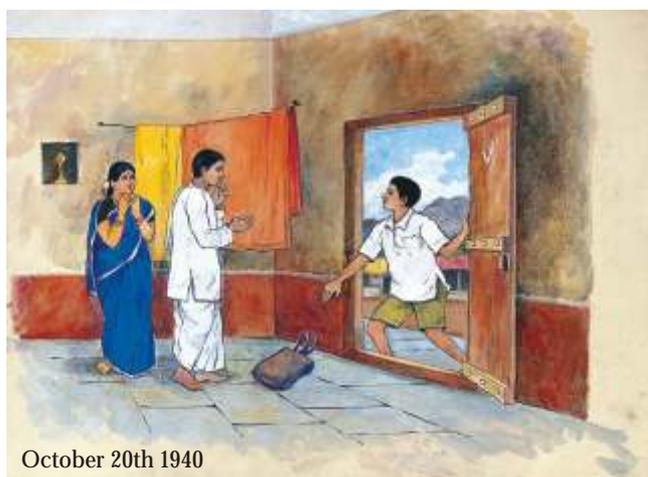


The *Avatar* had finally revealed Himself. Physically, Sai was still a fourteen-year old. Yet, such was His magnetism, and such was the faith of the devotees who flocked to Him that they had no reservation in accepting Him as a Divine Incarnation.

Baba now decided to return to Puttaparthi and make it the base for His Mission. The residents of Uravakonda gave Him a ceremonial and tearful send-off, and Baba was carried in

gifted to Swami by Subbamma. Later the hut was replaced by a tin shed with verandas on either side this is the famous *Paatha Mandiram* (old Mandir) of Puttaparthi folklore. Baba stayed in the shed while devotees occupied the veranda. There was a total absence of creature comforts and indeed even elementary conveniences that one takes for granted. Yet, for those devotees, sharing the same roof with Bhagavan Baba, was veritable heaven.

History repeated and *Paatha Mandiram* also began to overflow. Baba clearly needed a much bigger place to receive His devotees. Plans were made and in 1950, and what is now known as the Mandir (in Prasantinilayam), came into existence, in bare-bones form of



The Sathya Sai Story



The Jagathguru

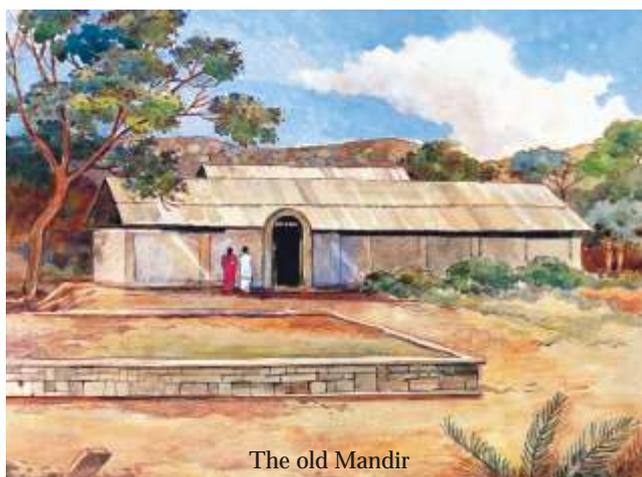
miracles as His visiting card. On occasions, He has explicitly discussed the nature of the Sai Avatar.

Let us move on to the next section where you can get a glimpse of the nature of Avatars, in Swami's own words!

course. Once Baba moved to Prasantinilayam, the tin shed previously occupied by Him was replaced by a brick and mortar structure the *Paatha Mandiram* of yore had now become the Pedda Venkama Raju Kalyana Mandapam (marriage hall); to this day, marriages are celebrated in this hall.

Every Avatar has a Mission. In 1958, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba revealed that His Mission would unfold itself in stages. The first sixteen years would be dominated by contact with individuals. Following this, attention would be given to groups. In the next phase, spiritual exhortation would be the dominant feature, after which service to humanity at large would become the principal focus.

Baba moves, lives, and acts like ordinary mortals do but His extra-ordinary Love (*Prema*), if noticed, would immediately reveal that He is nothing short of Divinity personified. At times, He uses miracles to draw attention to His Divine nature, which is why He refers to His



The old Mandir

“Of what use is it to honour the Avatar and hold the day when the Avatar took human form as sacred? The Message of the Avatar must be born, must become alive, must grow in you, your heart—that is the Birthday, you have to celebrate. Celebrate the Birthday in your own village. You need not travel long distances to where I physically am! Plant the seeds of Love in your hearts. Let them grow into trees of Service and shower the sweet fruit of Ananda. Share the Ananda with all. That is the proper way to celebrate the Birthday.”

“The day when you resolve to practise My advice; to follow my directives, to translate My message into acts of service, and to engage in spiritual disciplinethat day is My birthday for you. The 23rd of November which you now honor as the day on which I was born, is only like any other day, even if you celebrate it in a routine, ritual fashion. Adore man: the adoration reaches Me. Neglect man; you neglect Me. Of what avail is it to worship the Lord and to suppress man, His counterpart on earth? Love for God must be manifested as Love for man, and Love must express itself as service.”

A Message For Mankind: Letter to Seshama Raju

In 1940, Sathya was barely fourteen years old. Yet, such was the faith of the masses in His Divinity that people flocked, young and old, rich and poor. Included in this crowd of devotees were Maharajahs and members of the landed gentry. Besides, the Press also began take notice. Elder brother Seshama Raju, not yet fully aware of Baba's Divinity, began to worry about the impact of the attention that his younger brother was receiving. Would this adoration go to the head of young Sathya? Would He fall a victim to various temptations? Seshama Raju conveyed his anxiety to Baba, who sent a reply on 25th May, 1947. Though the letter was intended for Seshama Raju, it was in fact addressed to 'all who are devoted to Me'. That letter is a powerful declaration of the purpose of the Sai Avatar. In that letter, Baba wrote:



Seshama Raju

My dear One! I received all the communication that you sent. I found in it the surging floods of your devotion and affection, with the undercurrents of doubts and anxiety. Let Me tell you that it is impossible to plumb the hearts and discover the nature of Jnanis [Wise men], Yogis, ascetics, saints, sages, and the like. People are endowed with a variety of characteristics and mental attitudes; so, each one judges according his own angle, talks and argues in the light of his own nature. But we have to stick to our own path, our own wisdom, and our own resolution, without getting affected by popular appraisal. As the proverb says, it is only the fruit-laden tree that receives the shower of stone from the passersby. The good always provoke the bad into calumny; the bad always provoke the good into doing more good; this is the nature of the world. One must be surprised if such things do not happen.

People too have to be pitied rather than condemned. They do not know. They have no patience to judge right. They are too full of lust, anger, and conceit to see clearly and know fully. So, they write all sorts of things. If only they know, they would refrain from writing or talking like that. We too should not attach any value to such comments and take them to heart, as you seem to do. Truth will certainly triumph some day. Untruth can never win. Untruth might appear to over-power Truth, but its victory would fade away and Truth would establish itself.

It is not the way of the great to swell when people offer worship and shrink when people cool off. As a matter of fact, no sacred text lays down rules to regulate the lives of the great, prescribing habits and attitudes they must adopt. They

themselves know the path they must take. Their wisdom regulates and makes their acts holy. Self-reliance and beneficial activity these two are their special marks. They may also be engaged in the promotion of the welfare of devotees and in giving them the fruits of their actions. Why should you be affected by doubt and worry, so long as I am adhering to these two? After all, praise and blame do not touch the Atma; they can touch only the outer frame.

I have a Task: To foster all mankind, and ensure for all people lives full of Ananda.

I have a Vow: To lead all who stray away from the straight path, again into goodness and save them.

I am attached to a 'Work' that I love: To remove the suffering of the poor and grant them what they lack.

I have a 'reason to be proud': for, I rescue all who worship and adore me.

I have a definition of 'devotion': I expect that those devoted to Me treat joy and grief, gain and loss, with equal fortitude.

I will never give up those who attach themselves to Me. When I am thus engaged in My beneficial task, how can My Name be ever tarnished, as you apprehend? I would advise you not to heed to such absurd talk. Mahatmas do not acquire greatness through someone calling them so; they do not become small just because some calls them small. Only those low ones who revel in opium but claim to be unexcelled Yogis, only those who

A Message For Mankind: Letter to Seshama Raju

quote scriptural texts to justify their gourmandry and pride, only those who are dry-as-dust scholars exulting in their argumentative skill, are moved by praise and blame.

You must have read the life-stories of Saints and Divine personages. In those books, you must have read also of horrible falsehood and heinous imputations cast against them. This is the lot of mahatmas, everywhere, and at all times. Why then do you take these things so much to heart? Have you not heard of dogs that howl at the stars? How long can they go on? Authenticity will soon win.

I will not give up My Mission nor My determination. I SHALL carry them out. I treat with equanimity, the honour or dishonour that may result. Internally, I am totally unconcerned. I act, but solely in the outer world. If I talk and move about, it is entirely for the sake of the outer world, and for making the people realise the advent of Divinity. Other than this, I have no concern with anything

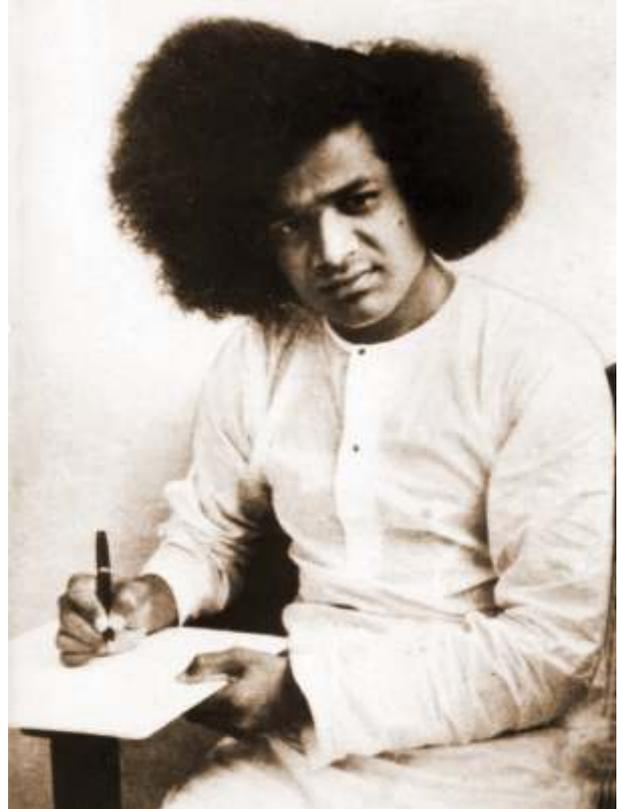
I do not belong to any place. I am not attached to any name. I have no 'Mine' or 'Thine'. I respond to whatever name you might use. I go wherever I am needed or called.

For Me, the world is something afar and apart. I act and move only for the sake of Mankind.

No one can comprehend My Glory, whosoever it may be, whatever be the method of enquiry, and no matter how long the attempt.

You will yourself see the full Glory unfolding in the coming years. Devotees must have patience and forbearance.

I am not concerned, nor am I anxious that these facts should be made known. I have no need to write these words. I wrote them because I felt that you will be pained if I do not reply.



The Young Sathya

Thus, yours, Baba.

ON 23RD NOVEMBER, RADIO SAI GLOBAL HARMONY COMPLETES TWO YEARS OF EXISTENCE. RADIO SAI JOINS THE WHOLE WORLD IN OFFERING GRATITUDE AND PRANAAMS TO BHAGAWAN BABA ON THE OCCASION OF HIS 78TH BIRTHDAY.

ALL THE TEAM MEMBERS OF RADIO SAI GLOBAL HARMONY AND PRASANTHI DIGITAL STUDIO PRAY TO HIM TO GIVE US THE STRENGTH TO SPREAD HIS MESSAGE OF LOVE AND SERVICE ALL OVER THE WORLD.

The Avatar on Himself



As we all know, an Avatar is an Incarnation of God. In a broad sense, everything in the Universe is a manifestation of God. Yet, the term Avatar is reserved for those Incarnations wherein the Lord deliberately assumes a specific form for a specific purpose.

About the meaning of the word Avatar, Swami says:

The word Avatar means descent. It is not coming down from the peak of a mountain or the top story of a tall building. It is a descent from the state of the Atma to the level of the body.

There is nothing infra-dig about the descent, as Bhagavan points out. He says:

No blemish attaches to the Divine as a result of the descent. There is no

diminution in Divine power either. Let us say there is a child playing on the ground. If the mother feels it is beneath her dignity to bend and tells the child to leap into her arms, the child cannot do so. The mother does not ask the child to do such an impossible thing. Instead, full of love, the mother stoops and lovingly picks up the child. Likewise, the Lord incarnates assuming a human form to bless and rescue those who cannot rise to the level of the Divine. Incarnation is an act of benediction.

What about the name Sai Baba of the present Poorna Avatar? Swami has this to say:

The name Sai Baba means Divine Mother and Divine Father. Like mother, I will be tender and soft and give you happiness, and like father I will punish you when needed. Through these methods I shall take you to a high level.

Why does God incarnate? No doubt Krishna has already outlined the reasons, but Swami goes deeper into the subject. He says:

To elevate man to the level of Supreme Consciousness, God has to incarnate as man. God has to speak to man in his own style and language. He has to teach mankind the methods that it can adopt and practice. Birds and beasts need no Divine incarnation to guide them for they have no inclination to stray away from

their respective Dharmas. Man alone forgets the goal of life.

In other words, God comes to play the role of a teacher and a Guru. As Swami elaborates:

The essential quality of an Avatar is to teach you to make good and proper use of your thought, word and deed. Depending on the conditions and the environment in the country, the Avatar will teach and show the right use of the Divine faculties gifted to man.

In earlier incarnations, the Lord physically annihilated the evil. What about this time? Swami has the answer:

In this Kali Age, the wicked have to be reformed and reconstructed through Love and Compassion. That is why this Avatar has come unarmed. The Avatar has come with the Message of Love.

Swami continues:



The Avatar on Himself

My objective is to establish unity in mankind, to reveal the aspect of the Divinity latent in man, and that God must be the only goal in life. It is also My duty to make you realize the kind of relationship that should exist between fellow human beings.

This is something very important, and all of us would do well to remember it. The first items on the agenda of this Avatar is to make each and every one of us realise our intrinsic Divine nature. Swami goes on to add,

There is considerable change in human outlook that I have to bring about. No one can stop Me or deter Me from fulfilling these tasks for which I have come, namely the establishment of the one unchanging Truth. In this task, you have a part to play.

Playing a role in Swami's global Mission calls for a proper attitude and frame of mind. Many people are carried away by Baba's miracles, but that is not correct, as Swami warns. He says:

You must take a path by which you can see deep in My heart, and experience the various Divine aspects of Mine. You must understand the all-knowing power in Me.



Do not be led away by people who always talk of having got a locket or a watch or a ring from Me. These things have no deep meaning

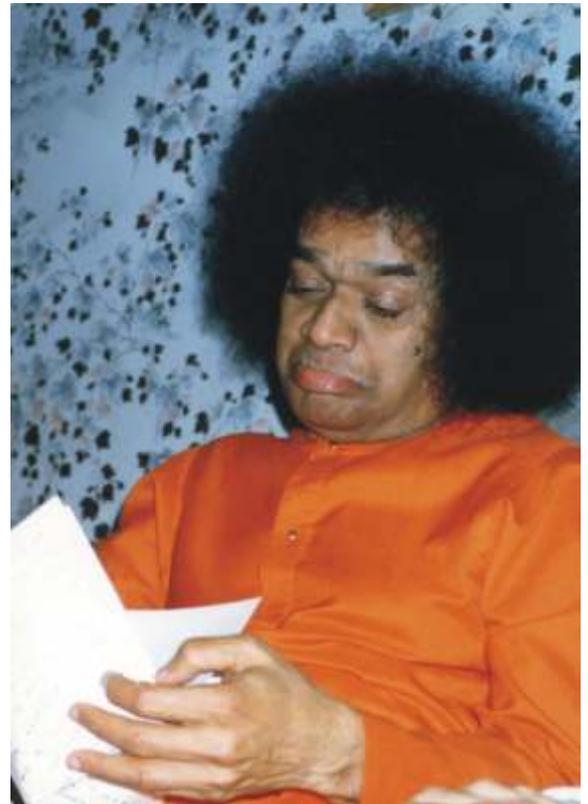
Swami is Love, in fact, Pure Love. No surprise in that since God is Love and Love is God. Swami adds that all Incarnations are embodiments of Pure Love, as indeed man also is. He says:

Divine Love is associated with Immortality. It is to teach mankind the truth about this Divine Love that Love itself incarnates on earth in human form.

It is to drive home the point that we all are sparks of the Divine, that Swami invariably begins His Divine Discourses with the words: EMBODIMENTS OF DIVINE LOVE, or EMBODIMENTS OF THE DIVINE ATMA.

Because the Avatar has a human form, man thinks [mistakenly of course] that the Avatar too is just another human being. In this context, Swami points out that

When Narayana takes the form of a man and wants to help



humanity, He will act like a man.

Just because God comes in human form, it is no excuse for man to be indifferent. He must realise that all the Poorna Avatars are incarnations of the same Formless, Eternal, Supreme Consciousness and the Cosmic, Omnipresent, Omnipotent, and Omniscient God. Swami conveys this idea in the following manner: He says:

Rama, Krishna, and Sai Baba appear different because of the dress donned, but it is the selfsame Entity, believe Me!

It has always happened that many people around the Avatar knew that the Avatar was God in human form; yet, they often forgot that fact. Why? Swami explains:

When the Avatar appears in human form, we find that He exhibits human consciousness along with Divine Consciousness. Ordinary people cannot

The Avatar on Himself

grasp the Divine Consciousness of the Avatar. God appears to be an ordinary human being to the limited intelligence of lay people because of the co-existence of the Divine and the human aspects of the Consciousness exhibited by Him. Man's perception is limited to the level of human consciousness. Therefore human comprehension is restricted by the limits of human consciousness. But the Sages of yore were able to cognise the Formless God in the visible Form because they had imbued themselves with Divine Consciousness. Thus, according to their levels, different people regard an Avatar as a mere human being or the Cosmic Reality.

All the above are quotes of Swami's pronouncements about Avatars in general. Let us now look at some of the things that Swami has said about the current Sathya Sai Avatar. He once observed:

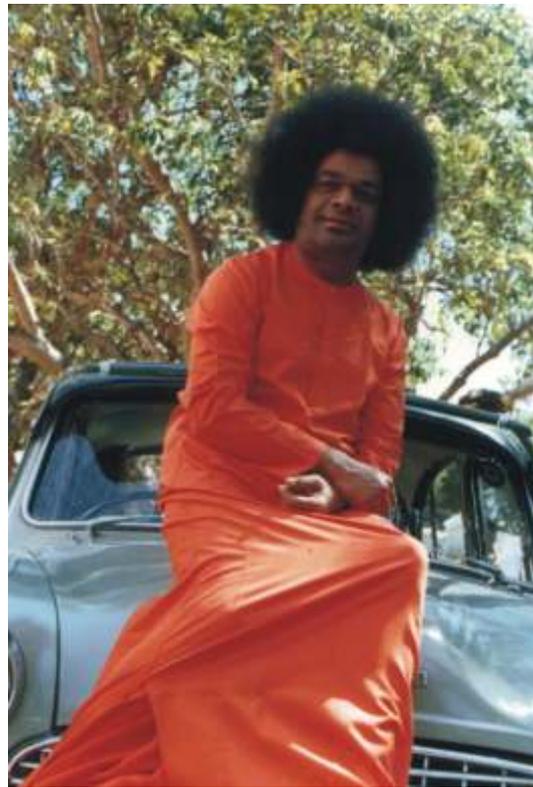
Because I am like an ordinary individual when I am talking with you and playing with you, many people do not understand My true nature. Even people with great strength of mind cannot recognize the true nature of Sai, and the difference between the external appearance and the internal aspect. Sai knows everything. That people are in doubt is due to the Maya of the Avatar.

There is no use telling people who refuse to know. For people who know, there is no need to tell. But for people who know and yet do not know, it becomes necessary to present what I call My visiting card. Therefore, if today I have chosen to tell you about Myself, it is with a view to present you with My visiting card. In the whole of our spiritual history, we find that only Krishna had proclaimed His Divinity in this manner.

Miracles no doubt have a powerful effect on all those who witness

them. Since miracles are considered super-natural, miracles alone are regarded as a sign of Divinity. Swami emphatically declares that miracles alone are not the signature of Divinity. He says in this context:

To talk of the Vibhuti that I give or to talk of the things that I materialize and the miracles I perform is not correct. Sometimes, I feel like laughing at the ignorance of people when they attach such importance to My miracles. People talk only of such things and forget the much



bigger aspect in Me. The most sacred quality in Me is Prema. This Prema is immeasurable!

I am Love, Love and Love. I am always Love! Love is everything but people do not understand Love!

Yes, God is Love and Love is God. Thus, Love is the true form of God, and we would do well to always see our beloved Swami as nothing but the embodiment of Purest Love.

Back to the Maya business. Warning devotees not to be deluded by His finite form, Baba cautions,

Since you see me in close proximity, you are not able to assess Me properly. Familiarity has deceived you to the point of delusion. Swami's form is BIG, VAST and INFINITE!

One of the reasons why all of us fall into the trap of Maya is that most of the time, Swami acts just like an ordinary human being there are no miracles. People then tend to forget the Infinite Divine Power latent in Him. About this, Swami says:

The attributes and the power of the Avatar remain unaltered in their pristine amplitude. The Divine manifests His powers according to the needs, the circumstances, and the conditions prevailing at a particular time or place.

Take, for example, the case of a Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. He has the power both to protect or punish. These powers can be exercised only when he is sitting in the judicial chair. The same Chief Justice, when he is at home, confers joy on his grandson by letting him ride on his back. By allowing the grandchild to play in this manner, does the Chief Justice forfeit his judicial powers? Similarly, the Avatar does not forgo any of His Supreme Powers merely because He lives and moves amongst human beings as a man.

An Avatar is capable of all things at all times. Yet, the Avatar will not undertake to demonstrate His powers all the time. The Avatar will exercise such powers only when exceptional circumstances demand it, and will shed Grace on a deserving person alone.

There is no limitation to My Power. There is no reason to limit or confine My Power
www.radiosai.org

The Avatar on Himself



and My Grace to any one place. Infinite Power and Infinite Grace are present in My hands. To state these things with regard to Myself becomes necessary at times.

People are sometimes confused. Why are there at times, setbacks in the life of an Avatar? Actually, there are never any setbacks. There cannot be. What seems to us as a setback is all a part of the Divine Drama. Sometimes we may understand the mystery but most of the time we do not. About this business of so-called apparent impediments to the Mission of the Avatar, Swami has this to say:

In an Avatar, there never will be a situation in which you can find fault with Him. The individual who accuses an Avatar will be hurting himself in his eye with his own finger.

At this stage, we would like to quote from a remarkable discourse given by Bhagavan during the Summer Course in 1974. This Discourse appears as Chapter 16 of Part II of the Proceedings and is entitled: **WHO IS SAI BABA?** In this, Bhagavan says:

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Inherent beauty and attractiveness are obvious in His playing and in His singing. These are the aspects of SIVASHAKTI that is immanent in Him. How is it possible for anyone to understand Sathya Sai merely from His external Form?

One very important characteristic of an Avatar is that He is totally selfless. Divinity knows no selfishness. God is ever compassionate, ever ready to sacrifice, and is totally free from desires. As Swami puts it,

There is no desire in Sai. Where is the space for desire in Sai? Everything is already Mine! Sai does not think. My will is instantly realized. Whatever it may be, it immediately appears.

To put it all simply, no one can understand the Avatar and His actions. As Swami once declared,

If Balarama [the brother of Krishna] himself could not understand Me, how can you?!

Indeed. So it is a futile exercise to try to understand Swami and analyse His actions. Instead, one must

concentrate on His teachings, absorb them, and follow them. We must appreciate that God has come on earth as man for an exalted purpose. We must not, even if it be unknowingly, trivialise the Divine Mission by asking Swami for trinkets. Swami of course does not mind. He gives us all that we ask for, even if they are useless. Why does He do so? Swami Himself has given the answer. He says,

I readily give you what you want, so that you may want what I have come to give.

And what is it that He is so eager to give us? The very same thing that He gave to Arjuna five thousand and odd years ago on the battle field the Knowledge of the Universal Self or *Atnavidya*. That is what the Avatar has come to give us and that really is what we must seek earnestly from Him.

COMING NEXT.....

The story of a million thirsty souls- *the people of Rayalseema*. The story of One compassionate heart- *Bhagawan Sri Satya Sai Baba*. The story of the *largest* service project ever undertaken by a private charitable organization.

The Sri Sathya Sai Drinking Water Project.....
Don't miss it!

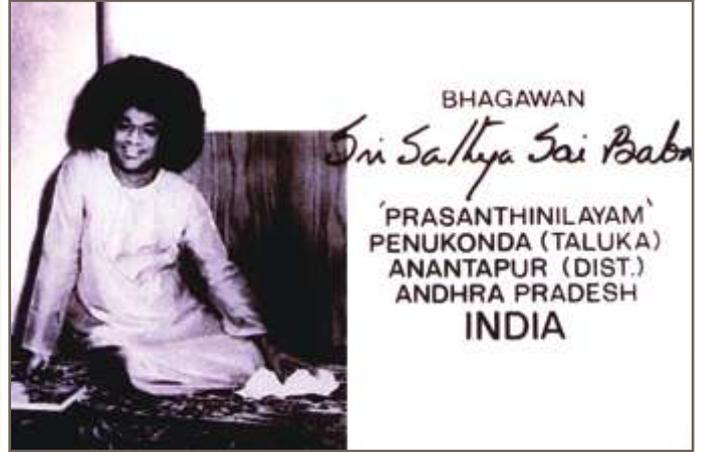
"There's none in the world who has been able to see Me. They are seeing every thing and they are trying to understand everything, but they are not making the slightest attempt to understand what is divinity, which is present within them. When we talk of God we should know that God has no birth. Birth is only for the body. A body which is born has to die but God is above birth and death. He has no beginning, no middle and no end. He is neither born nor can He be destroyed. He is present everywhere in the form of Atma."

His Visiting Cards

In the previous article on the Avatar we mentioned that from time to time, swami gives us something called a visiting card. In simple worlds, he manifests a miracle. Swami often says that miracles are for 'nidarshana' i.e establishing divinity and not for 'pradarshana' i.e exhibition. He points out the role of a miracle in the overall scheme of his plan: first chamatkar, a miracle. Then sanskar, or refinement. Next comes, paropakar, or selfless service and finally saakshaatkaar or the ultimate vision of the Divine. That is, He attracts us through the miracles, refines our hearts and minds with His teachings, and prods us along the path of selfless service which leads us to self realisation.

So you see, He is like the doctor who gives us the visiting card. There is no use glancing at the card and praising its beauty and expressing awe at the credentials of the doctor. One has to approach him, get diagnosed, take the prescription, follow it and get cured of the disease!

The visiting cards of our Divine Doctor come in many varieties and colours. The list is endless...but we present to you a few of hem...



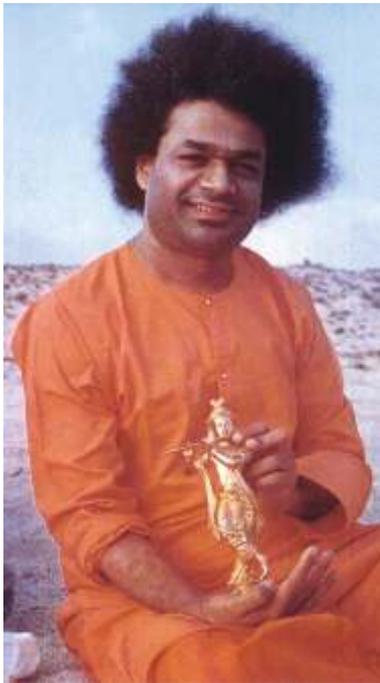
His Visiting Card

In the sixties and the seventies, this Shivarathri would draw unbelievably huge crowds because of the incredible vibhuti abhishekam [ceremonial vibhuti bath] that Baba performed, and the Lingodbhavam [bringing out the Lingam] that followed. Here are two accounts of the abhishekam, one by Kasturi who was privileged to participate in it, and another by Howard Murphet the Australian devotee who was simply stunned by the whole event.

Baba sometimes performs Abhishekam or ceremonial bath for the silver figure of His 'previous body' [i.e., the idol of Shirdi Baba], that is kept in the Mandir. A small wooden pot, artistically carved and painted, is filled with vibhuti for this purpose. Baba holds this pot upside down over the idol, puts His hand inside the pot and twirls it, so as to make the vibhuti flow evenly. Miraculously, the pot does not get emptied! The flow continues as long as His hand is inside, long after the original quantity has been exhausted. The twirling process brings down fresh showers of vibhuti, from the pot. When Baba withdraws His hand to switch over to the other one, the flow momentarily stops; but once the other hand is inserted, the flow resumes! This goes on till huge quantities of vibhuti have been poured on the idol, and the pile of vibhuti has mounted to unexpected heights.

N.Kasturi, in *Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram*, vol. I.

His Visiting Cards



Miracle at Dwaraka

above the statue with its open top downwards.

The following is an extract from the diary of Howard Murphet, quoted by him in his book *Sai Baba The Man of Mirades*. The entry is dated 18th February, 1966.

On the stage is a large silver statue of Shirdi Baba in His characteristic sitting posture. Mr Kasturi takes up a small wooden urn about a foot in height, and filled with vibhuti. This he holds above the head of the silver statue, and lets ash pour over the figure until the urn is empty. He shakes it well to make sure that the last grains have fallen out, then continues to hold it



Sacred Ash

alternate arms, ash pouring from the empty vessel while His hand is in it, and stopping immediately He takes it out. Finally, Shirdi Sai is buried in a great mound of ash much more than the vessel could possibly have held. Now the urn is placed on the ground; the miraculous, ceremonial ash-bath is over."

And finally find out what baba himself has to say about this event:

The vibhuti abhishekam has a potent inner meaning that Swami wants you to grasp. The vibhuti is the most precious thing in the truly spiritual sense. You know that Siva burnt and reduced to ashes Manmatha, the

Lord of Desires or Kama. Manmatha is the one who disturbs and agitates the mind, compounding the confusion that already exists. After destroying Manmatha, Siva adorned Himself with the ash, standing gloriously as the Destroyer of Desires. When desire is annihilated, Love reigns supreme. When there is no desire to warp the mind, Love is seen in its pure form and in full bloom.

Bhagavan Baba

If the *vibhuti abhishekam* was a stunning experience, the opportunity to witness the *Lingodbhavam* or bringing out the *Lingam* was an even greater sublime blessing. Let us first turn to Kasturi:



Shivaratri 1999

Since 1950, Sivarathri has been celebrated in Puttaparthi, and each year since the declaration of the manifestation, Lingams have materialised within His body. Baba has said that He often finds it difficult to

postpone or prevent the formation of Lingams within Him.

Bringing out the *Lingam* is quite a painful affair, as Kasturi describes:

Baba gives Darshan during the evening and then begins His Discourse. In between, there are spasmodic struggles in the stomach. He continues with the Discourse until the region of the struggle changes to the upper part of the chest and the neck. He seems to be undergoing some kind of a physical tension, and suddenly, to the joyous wonder of all, Lingams fall from His mouth. The Lingams that emanate on successive Sivarathris differ in number, size and composition.

And now, over to Murphet for his description of what he saw. Once again, it is from his diary entry.

But the big dimax of the day was yet to come, and many people talked to me about it. They told me that every year, one or more Siva Lingams have materialised in Baba's body at this sacred period. He ejects the Lingams through His mouth for all to observe. They are always hard, being made of crystal clear or coloured stone and sometimes of metals like silver or gold.

"Are you sure He does not pop them in His mouth just before He goes on stage, and then eject them again at the right moment?" I asked.

My hearers looked at me with amusement and pity. One of them said, "He talks and sings for a long time before the Lingam comes

His Visiting Cards

out, and it is always much too big to hold in the mouth while speaking. Last year, it was so large that He had to use His fingers to pull it out through His lips, and it stretched them so much that the sides of the mouth bled." Another one added, "There were nine one year. Each was about an inch and a half in height. Imagine holding all those in your mouth while you talked for an hour!"



Shivaratri In The 70s

The *Lingam* is the transitional link between the form-less and the form aspects of Godhead. The emergence of the *Lingam* represents the Emergence of the Cosmos

from the Formless. Do not exaggerate the creation and the manifestation of the *Lingam* from Me. In Me who can create the worlds and fill the Universe, there are things more worthy of adoration, that is Universal Love.

Bhagavan Baba

Year by year, the size of the *Sivarathri* crowd began to increase until it became almost impossible to manage. And then in 1977, Baba suspended the *Lingodbhavam*. Twenty two years later, out of compassion for the devotees, He revived the *Lingodbhavam*; on 15th February, 1999, He brought out the golden *Lingam*, *Hiranyagarbha*. He did likewise in the years 2000 and 2001 also.

The vibhuthi abhishekam and the *lingodbhavam* were two miracles which were witnessed by a large number of fortunate people. There others which baba performed in private gatherings...one such unique visiting card was given in Dwaraka, the holy city built by lord Krishna....

In May 1968, Baba went to the princely state of Jamnagar, in response to the prayers of the Prince, the Jamsaheb and his consort, popularly known as the Rajmata. Jamnagar forms a part of the present Gujarat State, and is famed for its many holy places such as Dwaraka, the city built by Krishna, and Somnath where the famous Siva Temple was repeatedly raided for its wealth by invading hords and tribals from Afghanistan.

Swami arrived in Jamnagar from Bombay on 14th May by a chartered plane, and on the following day left for Dwaraka [the city built by Krishna], accompanied by the members of His

party, other devotees and the Rajmata [Queen Mother] of the erstwhile Princely State of Nawanager. The residents of Dwaraka and Sai devotees from other towns packed every inch of available space in the Krishna Temple, long before Baba arrived. While Baba could easily enter the Temple, the others were pushed, crushed, jostled, and squeezed. Seeing the plight of those who came with Him, Baba came out and drove away.

While returning to Jamnagar in the evening, Baba suddenly said, "Look! The sea is here!" The cars stopped. The party went to the beach where after strolling for some time, everyone sat down on the sand. Baba then heaped the soft sand to a height of about half a metre in front of Him, putting all into a state of extreme expectancy. He then flattened the heap, and drew a pattern on it. "It is ready", He said, wiping the sand from His hands. He then dug His hands deep into the pile and drew forth a bright golden image of Krishna approximately 25 cm high. It was the image of Krishna playing the flute, the very acme of goldsmith's art and craftsmanship. "You did not get the *Darshan* of Krishna in the Temple; have it now!" He said. For devotees, it was a moment of supreme ecstasy.

Did you like these visiting cards of His? Preserve these visiting cards in your heart and call on Him whenever necessary. He is always ready, waiting to attend on you!



The Vibhuti Abhishekam

The Gift of Darshan

The experience that is freely available to all and the one everyone invariably looks forward to is *Darshan*. To be in the Divine presence and to catch a glimpse of Swami as He gently glides along is the longing of all devotees. Just for this, they come from all over the world. How they crane their necks to see Him as He comes out! That is hunger for the Divine; that is the deep yearning for the Divine. If that thirst is there, then He makes sure that it is satisfied....whatever the place and circumstances. Our joy is His joy. As Kasturi found out:

Baba visited Kakadi village and Razole in the Delta of Krishna river and then proceeded to the village of Sathyavada, where the yearning of rural hearts drew Him. The village houses have thick and high mud walls around them and so, Baba could not grant Darshan to the thousands who filled the narrow serpentine lanes. Sensing the anguish of the crowds outside the walls, Baba had a ladder brought, a narrow contraption with eight horizontal rods as steps; He climbed it, reached the top, and got a precarious foothold on the crest of the wall. He stood there, silhouetted against the sky, in the hot Sun, to confer coveted Darshan on the people. I have seen Him ascend the parapet of walls of storied bungalows and the top of His own car in order to give Darshan to milling crowds and to calm their ardour. In Bombay, He has walked on the parapet of the Gwalior Palace; in Kurnool, He has stood on the narrow slab on top of an arch; in Budili, He has stood on a chair placed on a bullock cart; in Trivandrum He stood on the top of a Fiat car in the hot Sun so that more people could see Him and feel joy. But, this quick climb up the bamboo ladder placed against the mud wall, the stately stand on the narrow wall, will shine in my mind as a golden memory of His Grace!

On another occasion, Baba went to Hindupur, a town about fifty kilometres away, that He had visited last when quite a boy..... He was taken in procession through the streets of the town in an open jeep. While devotees felt that He was in the scorching Sun far too long, Baba expressed His joy that the jeep had wound its way through all the roads and by-lanes of the town. Later He said, "How else could the sick, the weak, the lame, and the old get My Darshan?"

The Darshan of Baba is a creative chance to transmute our base metal into gold. To listen to His words is to be charged with the current of spiritual regeneration. To read His writings is to feed the intellect with wholesome sustenance and purge it of egoistic dross.

Let us now find out what Swami Himself has to say about Darshan on various occasions:

Later it may be difficult to approach Me and ask Me. For, people are



The Gift of Darshan

coming towards Me in full, unending streams, and you may have to have My Darshan from miles away!

There are those who may never see Me in the concrete form. They have, all the same, reached Me through a friend, a book, or a photograph. To each of these, if they yearn deeply, I give My Darshan inwardly. These too I love as deeply, for they have begun to see themselves as being beyond their body, as Divine Souls. This is the advancement towards Self-Realisation.

After My Darshan, always find a quiet corner, where you may enter into the stillness and receive the completion of My Blessings. As I pass you, My Energy goes from Me into you. If, immediately after Darshan, you start talking the precious Energy gifted to you gets dissipated and returns to Me unused. Be assured that whatever My eyes see, becomes vitalised and transmuted. You are being changed day by day never underestimate what is being accomplished by the act of My Darshan.

My walking amongst you is a gift yearned for by the gods of the Highest Heavens; but here you are receiving this Grace without much effort. Be grateful for what you are getting. The Blessings you receive would express themselves in due course, when the time comes. But also remember: To whom much is given, from him much also would be demanded!

Well, it is time we realize how lucky we are to be able to see God walking on earth!



The Ocean of Compassion

Swami often says that man is a limb of society; society is a limb of mankind; mankind is a limb of Nature; and Nature is a limb of God. This is the hierarchical and organic relationship between man and God. If man forgets this, he can and does get into all kinds of problems, as in fact is presently happening.

Man today has completely forgotten that Nature does not stand alone, and that it is the Creation of God. Out of compassion, God has packed Nature with innumerable bounties, all for man to use and enjoy. However, the use of these gifts must be within reasonable bounds, going hand in hand with the expression of gratitude to God. But alas, the use [or rather the exploitation] of these bounties has become shockingly reckless, and there is no gratitude either. Under such circumstances, Nature does not remain a silent spectator. Incredibly patient she is but when aroused, her fury is unmatched. Using the law of reflection, reaction, resound, she punishes man via murderous tornadoes, terrifying typhoons, grim famines, deadly epidemics, harsh droughts, disastrous floods, fearsome avalanches, massive landslides, fiery volcanic eruptions, devastating earthquakes, and what not.

Meanwhile, what should one do when



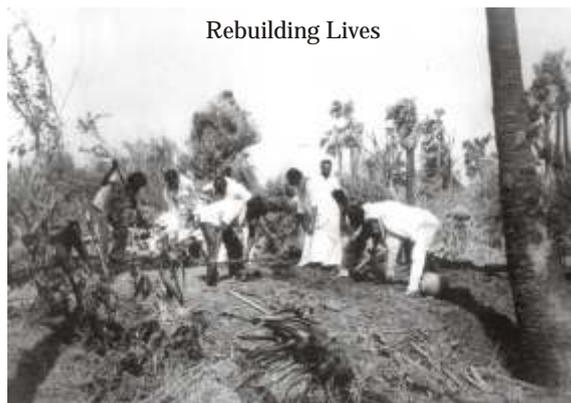
The Face Of Compassion

disaster strikes? There are some that say, "It is all God's will. Those who suffer are destined to do so. Let us leave them alone." This is an incredibly ridiculous argument. If it were taken seriously, there would be no room for any doctors! Baba makes it very clear that we have no business to sit in judgement on others. Rather, we must rush to help that is what the famous parable of the Good Samaritan is all about. And just so that we do not forget, Swami repeats that lesson by His own personal example any number of times. His compassionate response at the time of the Andhra cyclone in 1977, and the Gujarath earthquake in 2001 are two just two such instances

A terror-striking cyclone had hit the Andhra coast in 1977. The cyclone brought in its wake, a twenty-foot tidal wave [i.e., about seven metres high], that spread itself over a large part of the coast and penetrated about thirty miles [about fifty kilometres] inland, before spending its fury. The devastation inflicted by the combined force

of wind and water was enormous. Tens of thousands died, cattle perished in large numbers, scores of villages were wiped out, and an enormous number of coconut trees were uprooted. The survivors were confronted by disease, despair, and decimation. Bhagavan directed the Seva Dal from Andhra to rush to the area. Truckload of clothes, rugs, and whatever could be gathered were speedily despatched Four relief camps were set up. Massive provisions and materials being carried by devotees as headloads. They had to wade through slush and mire, through thick clouds of stench from rotting corpses and carcass. Indeed the first task was to bury or burn these, which they found in heaps on the ground and even on trees and bushes. Kitchens worked round the clock in four strategic centres for over a month. Food was sent from there to several places, including remote ones Besides this, the Seva Dal helped to build huts. They also gave away, utensils, clothes, and rugs, as a part of the rehabilitation. When the Seva activities finally came to a close, the volunteers were happy that the faces of the masses around them were bright with gratitude and devotion for Bhagavan.

It was 8.45 A.M. on 26th January, 2001, a day celebrated in India as Republic Day. In Delhi the Nation's Capital, an impressive parade is held in the morning at which the President takes the salute. Around the same time, parades and flag-hoisting ceremonies



Rebuilding Lives



Victims of the Cyclone

The Ocean of Compassion

are held all over India, particularly in schools. In Gujarat, many children were marching to their schools at that hour. And then the earth shook fearsomely, like never before. Buildings crumbled and in a few quick seconds, thousands were trapped under the debris, including school children on their way to parades. Entire villages were wiped out just like that, in barely a few minutes. Death did not make any distinctions the young, the old, the rich, and the poor, all became equal before it.

As news trickled in from the disaster area, gloom descended over the Nation. The cry of anguish reached even far off lands, and help poured in. Baba was in Bangalore then, spending some time there after the inauguration of the big Hospital. People rushed to Him to give the news about the disaster. Quietly He listened. He of course knew much before anyone else when the disaster actually struck and also why; but He did not give any inkling of what He knew. Silently and most unobtrusively, He organised help and relief in typical Sai fashion, as soon as He returned to Prasanthi Nilayam. Trucks were lined up, loaded with food and other relief items, and given a loving send off with devotees singing *Bhajans* and Swami personally blessing the convoy. While Seva Dal volunteers from Gujarat and the neighbouring state of Maharashtra were already on duty at the distress spot, Baba added a sweet touch by specially sending some of the people from Prasanthi Nilayam, to go all the way to Gujarat, stay there for as many days as were required, and supervise the distribution. In many ways, this was reminiscent of His sending Mr. Kasturi to supervise *Seva* during the Andhra cyclone of the seventies.

For most volunteer organisations, service ended after the items had been distributed. With Swami it was quite different. He had given instructions that these villages [which had been reduced to ghost-towns] have to be rebuilt by Sai effort that is the most

wonderful and unusual part of the *Seva* rendered in Gujarat. In other words, with Sai it is not just relief but also rehabilitation. That is real concern and that is real compassion. Long after other volunteers have returned their respective bases, Sai volunteers are still in Gujarat, helping to restore normalcy.

The Gujarat earthquake taught many lessons. The first was a reminder that Nature is not to be treated lightly. In fact, in His Discourse on the occasion of *Sivarathri* that followed the quake, Baba reminded devotees of this fact. Next, by His action, Swami also firmly refuted the flimsy excuse sometimes given for inaction, namely that people who suffer are destined to do so. He made it abundantly clear that we not here to analyse the Law of *Karma* but to render service, irrespective of the antecedents of the recipients of the service that is what true Love and compassion are all about.

"Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu (Let all beings in all the worlds be happy). Include this universal prayer in your prayers every day. This is my birthday message to you."



Relief From The Lord



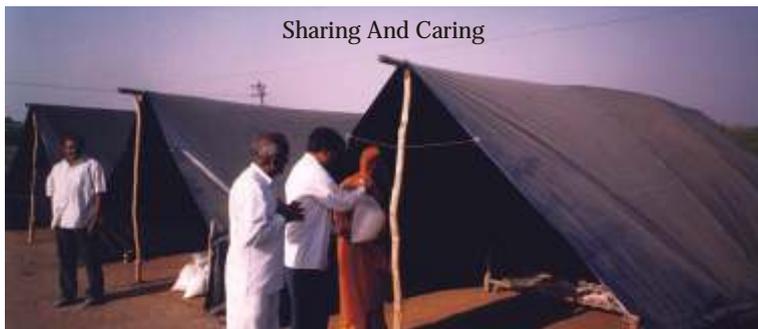
Seva In Gujarat



Tragedy In Gujarat



When the earth Shook



Sharing And Caring

Aura of Divinity

It is often said that Divine personalities have an aura about them. Some scientists believe that all living beings, including plants, have an aura. This is not visible to the eye but can be photographed by a technique known as Kirlian photography.

Dr. Frank Baronowski, a Professor in Arizona State University in America, is an expert in this field. He not only photographs aura but is blessed with the rare gift of being able to see the aura directly with his eyes.



Aura of Divinity

In 1979, he came to India to make a study of aura of holy men in the country. Inevitably, his travels brought him to Baba, who was then in Bangalore. At the time Baronowski reached Whitefield, a course arranged by Baba for school teachers was in progress. Baronowski heard about this and was naturally keen to speak in the conference, sharing his numerous experiences. Baba knew about this and in His own way made it possible. But first, Baronowski had to see something he had never seen before!

The Professor's first glimpse of Swami was during the early morning *Darshan*. In those days, Swami used to give *Darshan* at the conclusion of the *Nagarsankeertan*, the early morning prayer/*Bhajan* procession that one can see to this day in Prasanti Nilayam. Baronowski was stunned by what he saw Baba's aura was simply out of this world. He saw it again and again during the morning *Darshan* and the afternoon *Darshan*. He saw how this extra-ordinary aura enveloped one and all, believers and non-believers alike, those who were directly looking at Him and those whose attention was wandering. Later, Baronowski was given the opportunity to speak during the conference proceedings, in the immediate presence of Bhagavan Baba. Here is an extract of what he said:

I have met over a hundred holy men in India. Too many of these holy men are involved in their own personal egos. Their auras show mostly concern for themselves and their institutions. So, the auras are only about 25 cm. broad or perhaps 50 cm. I am not a devotee of Sai Baba. I have come here as a scientist, to see this man Sai Baba.

I saw Him on Sunday, on the balcony giving Darshan to devotees below. The aura that Baba projected was not that of a man. The white was more than twice the size of any man's, the blue was practically limitless, and there were gold and silver bands beyond even those, far beyond this

building, right up to the horizon. There is no scientific explanation for this phenomenon.

His aura is so strong that it is affecting me standing by the chair on which He is sitting I can feel the effect and I have to wipe my arm, off and on, as you must have noticed. It is very difficult for me to admit. I am a scientist. I have given over six thousand lectures in all parts of the world, but this is the first time, believe me, my knees are shaking. The aura that emanates from Baba shows His Love for you. I have met any number of holy men, but none of them have made themselves as available to you as Baba does. That is a sign of greatness.

Baba has given you the key to success the simple four-lettered word: LOVE! If ever I can use the phrase that I have seen Love walking on two feet, it is here.

I have been watching Baba, while He was addressing you. The pink aura that was manifesting was so vast and strong that it went even to the hall behind this chair. It filled the big hall, embracing all of you here. There can be no scientific explanation for this phenomenon. I have watched Him for a week now as He walked among you, morning and evening I have seen this aura, pink in colour, go into the person He is talking to or touching. This is because we draw on His energy. His energy seems to be limitless. It spreads everywhere and can be drawn upon by everyone around. An ordinary man will soon get exhausted going round as He does, among so many. I have watched Him come to a little girl, in a wheel chair and tickle her. I was astounded at the aura of Love that was all around Him then.

I am not brought up in any belief, though I am a Christian born and a Roman Catholic. The scientific community in my country finds it difficult to accept a God. It is not scientific, they assert. I am risking my reputation when I make this statement. Two days ago, right outside this hall, I looked into His eyes. They have a glow inside them. It is clear to me that I looked into the face of Divinity. There is no scientific explanation for this; there should not be! In my estimation, He is exactly what He appears to be LOVE! That is what He is!



Baronowski with Baba

I have spoken on platforms where President Ford of the United States, Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain and Queen Wilhelmina of Netherlands have been present, but I will never forget this experience! It is really overwhelming in its impact.

Dr. Baronowski had the rare blessing to 'see' the aura of Love. The rest of us may not be able to 'see' it, but none can deny that we all 'feel' the infinite Love of Bhagavan, when in His presence or even when we just think Him!

Puttaparthi, the Global Village



Just imagine! This Puttaparthi that was once a hamlet with a population of just a little over hundred people, has now grown to a town with a population of about a lakh of people. Just wait and see in a short while, Puttaparthi is going to become a landmark on the map of the world. It would become a name to be reckoned with in every major developed country in the world such as Japan, Germany, Italy, France, etc. People everywhere would start regarding Puttaparthi as an important location. The students of Puttaparthi should realise their good fortune.

Bhagavan Baba
19th October, 1999.

Most of you might have come to Puttaparthi one time or the other to have Swami's Darshan or heard of it from some friend of yours who has been there. Or at least seen pictures of it. Whatever may be the case, if one sees Puttaparthi today, one would scarcely believe that this is the same village, which 40 years back, has been called 'ten minutes past the stone age'!

This is what one finds in Puttaparthi today: a sprawling, organised self sustained township, The Prasanthi nilayam. A university offering the latest

Puttaparthi, the Global Village

courses. A super speciality hospital with state of the art equipment. Busy streets with people of all nations, colours, creeds and languages. Automatic teller machines, branches of major banks, money exchanges, internet parlours, highrise buildings and cellular towers. Puttaparthi is truly global.

But walk further down from the ashram and suddenly the landscape changes. There are closely spaced houses in narrow streets inhabited by simple and innocent village people. Across the street one may find a farmer plying his produce on the bullock cart to the local market. Come rainy season, and scores of village children can be seen taking a swim in the adjacent Chitravathi river. Puttaparthi is a village, a beautiful typical Indian village.

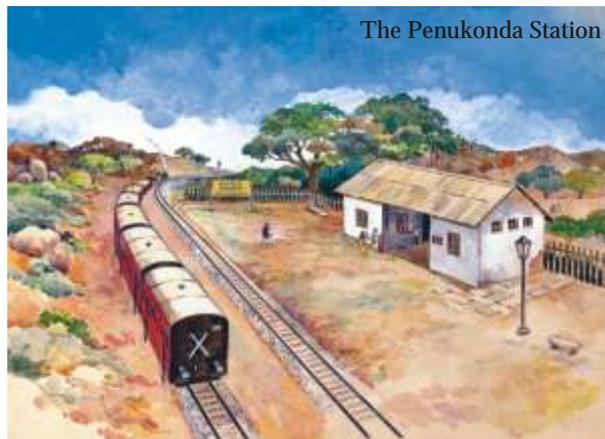
To sum it up, it is a Global Village connected by the road, the rail and the air.

Reaching the Lord's abode has become relatively easy nowadays but half a century back it was different. It could probably be counted in the same league as trekking to the top of the Everest! There was a reason for this: The time had not yet come for the world to witness His Glory! The Lord had to give access only to a few privileged and persistent devotees who did not mind any difficulties in reaching His abode. The first difficulty of course was that people did not know that such a village existed!

To get a feel for how it was to come to Puttaparthi about half a century ago, let us turn to Mrs. Vijayakumari who first came there in 1945 as a small girl, along with her family. We pick up her narration from the time their party got down from the train at Penukonda Railway Station.

"It was in October 1945 that we first went there. Our train reached Penukonda station at 1 A.M. It was pitch dark. There was not even a platform, and we had to jump quickly from the compartment.... There was not a soul in the station. Outside the station, we saw a few horse carts. Father said, 'It seems there is a choultry [a free lodge] in the town. Let us go.'It took us one hour to reach the village. The driver asked us to get down, pointed to a stone slab on the wayside and asked us to wait there. To our query, 'How is one to spend the night here?' he gruffly answered, 'Who will open the choultry for you in the middle of the night? Wait there till the morning' With a frown on his face he dumped our luggage on the ground and left.

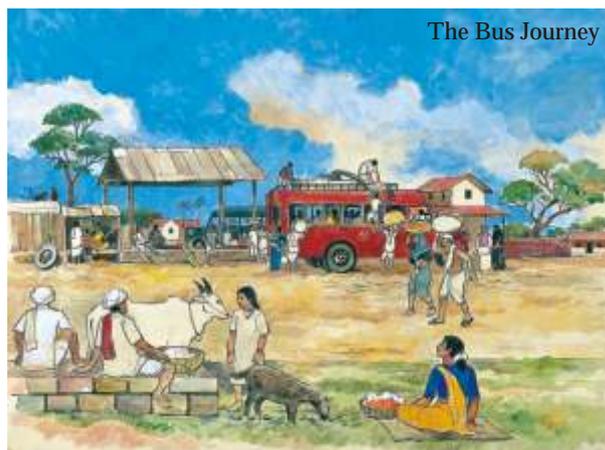
We spent the rest of the night in that shed, waiting for dawn. The Rain God sent a downpour for full two hours. A troop of monkeys came from apparently nowhere and started attacking our luggage... At last the bus appeared. But getting tickets was a problem. It was only after we sat in the bus that we came to know antagonism towards Swami was the main reason for not issuing tickets to us. They were using foul language. 'That little fellow the size of a finger proclaims, 'I am Sai Baba,' and all of you believe him and run after him like mad people.' Not knowing what to do, we closed our ears and sat silently. Just then, our vehicle started moving. It



The Penukonda Station

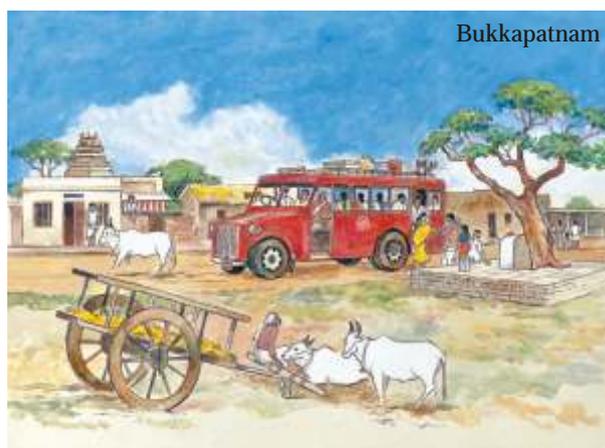
was not a bus; it would be more appropriate to call it a box made up of tin sheets.

We reached Bukkapatnam around twelve noon. It was a tiny hamlet; there were hardly about ten houses. We were told that from here, we still



The Bus Journey

had to go another five miles in a bullock cart. A cart was engaged. ... There was nothing but four uneven wooden planks, on either side. It was a horrible road, full of ups and downs. We felt that walking might be better than travelling in the cart. Whenever the cart moved on a slope, the luggage slid towards the front of the cart, and we had to cling to the boxes, making sure that we ourselves did not fall down.



Bukkapatnam

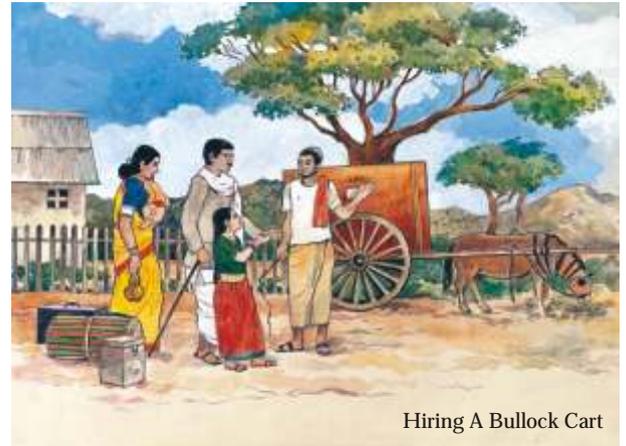
Puttaparthi, the Global Village

Finally, we reached Karnataka Nagepalli. We assumed that this was our destination but were dismayed when a man told us, 'No, you have to cross the river and go beyond.' ... When we stepped into the river with gnashing teeth, our feet seem to be sinking in elbow-deep water. Like the bullocks, we too trudged on behind the cart driver, panting and puffing. Our throats were parched and dry. ... Somehow we crossed the river and reached the other shore. ... Some men were standing on top of a hill in front of us, waved to us, and started walking towards us. We were surprised because none of them were known to us. One boy in that group looked very sweet. He was strikingly charming ... We thought he was a disciple of Baba.

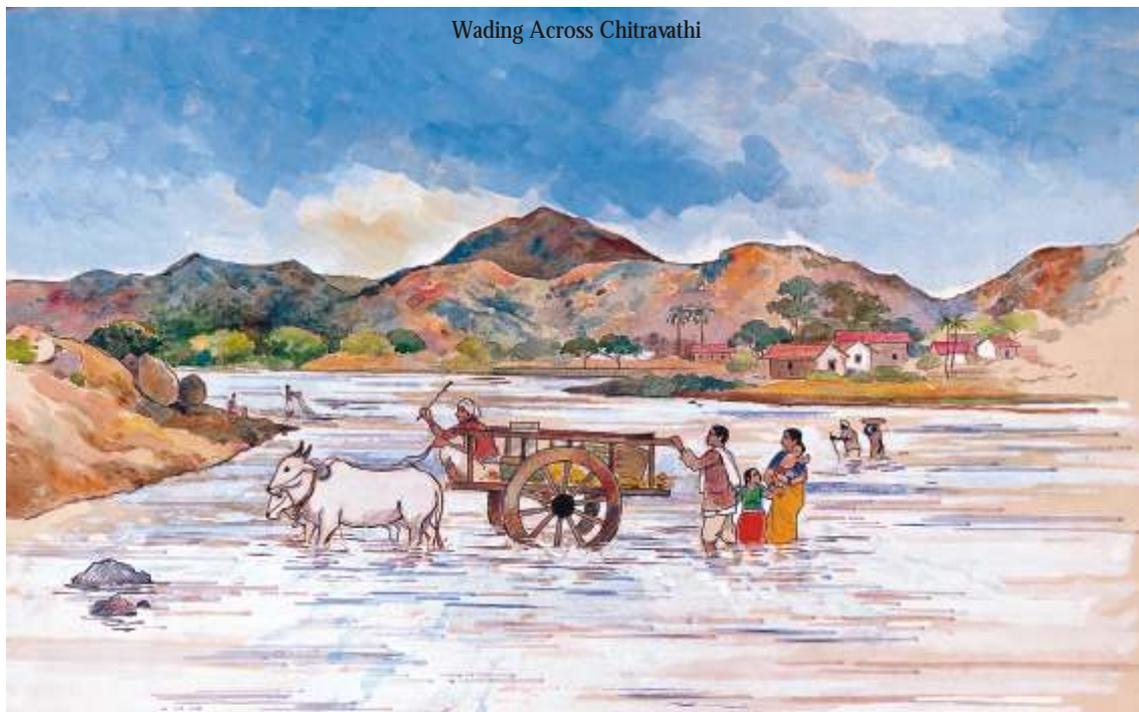
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No he was not. That was Baba Himself, come to receive the devotees whom He, in infinite mercy, was now drawing into His fold! It is interesting to note that Baba increased His 'following' in a controlled manner, commensurate with the development of local facilities on the one hand, and the capacity of the devotee to put up with inconveniences on the other. With His powers, Swami could have overnight changed things beyond description; He did not do that. Instead, He allowed things to evolve in a measured manner, in the process also demonstrating how villages could be greatly developed just invoking the power of Love.

As Smt. Vijayakumari put it, Swami's love is the singular cause for the Glory of Puttaparthi, for it to have found its way on to the world map.



Hiring A Bullock Cart

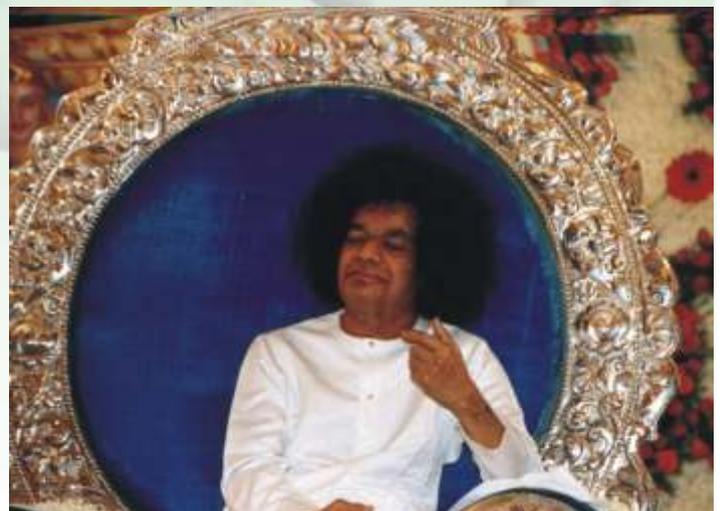
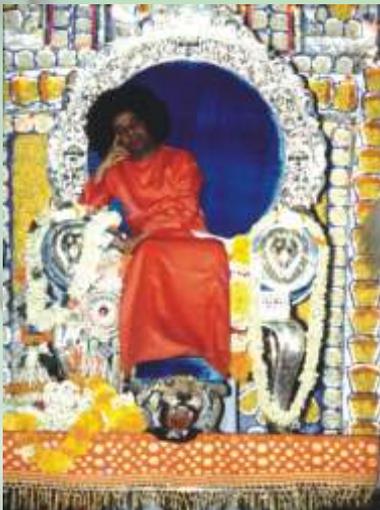
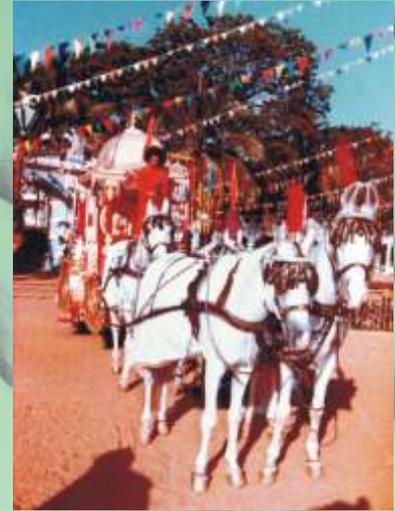


Wading Across Chitravathi

"Embodiments of Love! Do not pay attention to the day when the body was born and fulfil selfish ends by celebrating the event pompously. The day when you manifest pure feelings in your hearts, plant firm faith in the Divine Principle in your thoughts and cultivate unselfish enthusiasm to serve others, that day deserves to be celebrated as the Real Birthday. Seva can give you the experience of the Omnipresence of God, God as Vishnu."

Down Memory Lane

Dear readers,
This time we take you down memory lane to some of the moments of earlier Birthday celebrations of Bhagawan, starting from the early years to the recent years.



Anecdotes

ALWAYS GIVING!

It is a common sight in Prasanthinilayam to see Swami distributing various things. No one can say what He will give, to whom He will give, and when He will give; but that He will give, one can always be sure of

Swami distributes all sorts of things; these include fruits of the season such as oranges, mangoes, papayas, and apples. Once He even distributed water melons! It is not just sweets, biscuits, chocolates, and the like. As birthday time approaches, the items distributed can be clocks, watches, calculators, cameras, shirting pieces, dhotis, sarees, sewing machines, push carts [for vending], hand-pedal cycle carts [for the disabled] - you name it. At new year time it is often calendars and diaries. So on it goes, not only in Puttaparthi but also in Whitefield and in Kodaikanal.



Swami does this because He wants people to remember that man is born to give and not to GRAB [which is what is happening most of the time these days]. Further, one must give not out of a sense of condescension but with the idea of filling the heart of the receiver with joy and happiness. Some people crave to accumulate wealth. Swami is very critical of this, adding that wealth accumulated is like dung piled up in one spot; it will only radiate foul odour. But if the same dung were to be scattered on a field, it would result in a good crop. This, says Baba, is also true of wealth. If money is hoarded in a bank, it will benefit no one but if it is spent for the benefit of the community, it would bring prosperity to all including the one who is spending.



God does not mind if people do not realise who He is!

In the celebrated *Bhagavad Gita*, Lord Krishna says that when God comes in human form, most people mistake Him to be just another man. This frequently happens in the case of our beloved Baba also, notwithstanding His innumerable miracles and *Leelas*, all of which are a clear signature of His Divinity. There is a charming incident that highlights this human fallibility.

Many decades ago, Swami visited the house of a devotee in Bombay. Over there, Baba moved about very freely with the members of the family, as He always does on such occasions. Among other things, He spent some time walking to and fro with the aged mother of his host. This old lady was so happy that in the end she placed her hand on Swami's head and sweetly said, "God bless

Who is the most beautiful of them all?

There is on the stage in Sai Ramesh Kishan Hall in Brindavan, a beautiful brass idol of Krishna. Some years ago when the idol was delivered to Baba for installation, three people were there with Him. One by one He asked them what they thought about the statue. The first two said that it was very beautiful. The third person to be so asked was the Rajmata [Queen Mother] of the erstwhile Princely State of Nawanagar. Without a moment of hesitation she replied, "Not as beautiful as My Lord here!"

The story has a moral. God may have a human form but God He remains; it is for the devotees to recognise His Divinity. Further, the Creator is always more glorious and grand than anything in Creation, however beautiful it might seem!



Anecdotes

PARENT

Ancient Indian scriptures say: "Mother is God, Father is God." The Bible says: "Honour thy father and mother." In the past, aged parents were cared for in all societies. But alas in modern times, people seem to think that aged parents too must be cast away like worn-out clothes and appliances. Since longevity has increased, the problem of aged and abandoned parents has become an acute problem, especially in the developed countries. Sons and daughters who owe their very existence to the sacrifices that their parents made for their sake, abandon their parents without batting an eyelid. Thus it is that Homes for the Aged and the Destitute have sprung up all over the world.

Swami constantly reminds all devotees and particularly students, that they should never forget the debt they owe to their parents. He says that when we rent a house or a room, we pay rent to the landlord. Likewise, we must pay "rent" to the [maternal] parent for occupying the womb for nine months at a stretch. In His typical fashion He adds: "Parent means PAY RENT!" In 1999, Swami set up a Home for Destitute Parents near His Brindavan Ashram. The message has since gone home and now many Seva groups have done likewise in their respective areas.



TAMING THE FLOODS

Swami has the power to control Nature but He rarely interferes with natural phenomena. His argument is very simple. He says, "I have ordained the forces of Nature and they have their duties to perform. However, when it becomes absolutely essential for the welfare of mankind, I intervene in a benign manner." As young Krishna, he lifted an entire hill to protect the people of His village from a deluge. As Sai too, He has several times done similar things. One example is provided by the floods of 1973.

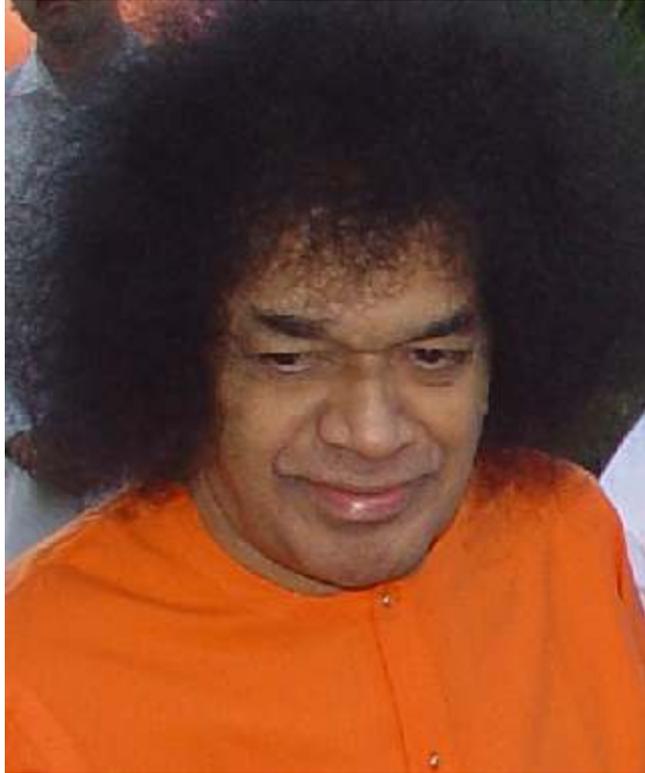
That year, thanks to very heavy rain, there was an unprecedented flood in the Chitravathi river. Water submerged all the low-lying parts of Puttaparthi, and came right up to the Ganesha and the Gopuram gates. The *Ashram* being at a relatively higher elevation, the flood waters had not yet entered its premises, but were threatening to do so. Meanwhile, all the villagers flocked into the *Ashram* seeking shelter. The compassionate Bhagavan not only allowed the villagers to take shelter but also provided them with food.

The weather continued to be inclement, and it appeared as if the water level might rise even further. At this stage, Baba went to the East Prasanthi block of flats, and climbed up to the terrace. From there He looked down at the overflowing river, and whispered something. People nearby could not make out what Swami was saying but they could clearly hear the word *Shanti* being repeated three times. While 'advising' the river to calm down, Baba also raised His hands in a

gesture of benediction. Miraculously, the flood waters began to recede immediately, and within a few hours, the people huddled in the *Ashram* could go back to their homes.

There are also occasions when Swami emphatically refuses to intervene. Once during a Discourse, it was raining heavily. Devotees prayed that the rain be stopped but Baba brushed aside the request. He explained that while the rain might be an inconvenience for them, the farmers were eagerly looking forward to precisely this downpour. Devotees must not be selfish, He added.





It is the power of love that is responsible for the earth to rotate without a pivot. It is the power of love that makes the stars stand across the sky without falling on the ground. It is the power of love that keeps the oceans within their limits. It is the power of love that makes the wind blow incessantly in all the worlds. That power of love is mysterious, infinite, most wonderful and one without a second; it permeates the entire cosmos. The entire creation is saturated with Love.

- Baba



Love All Serve All