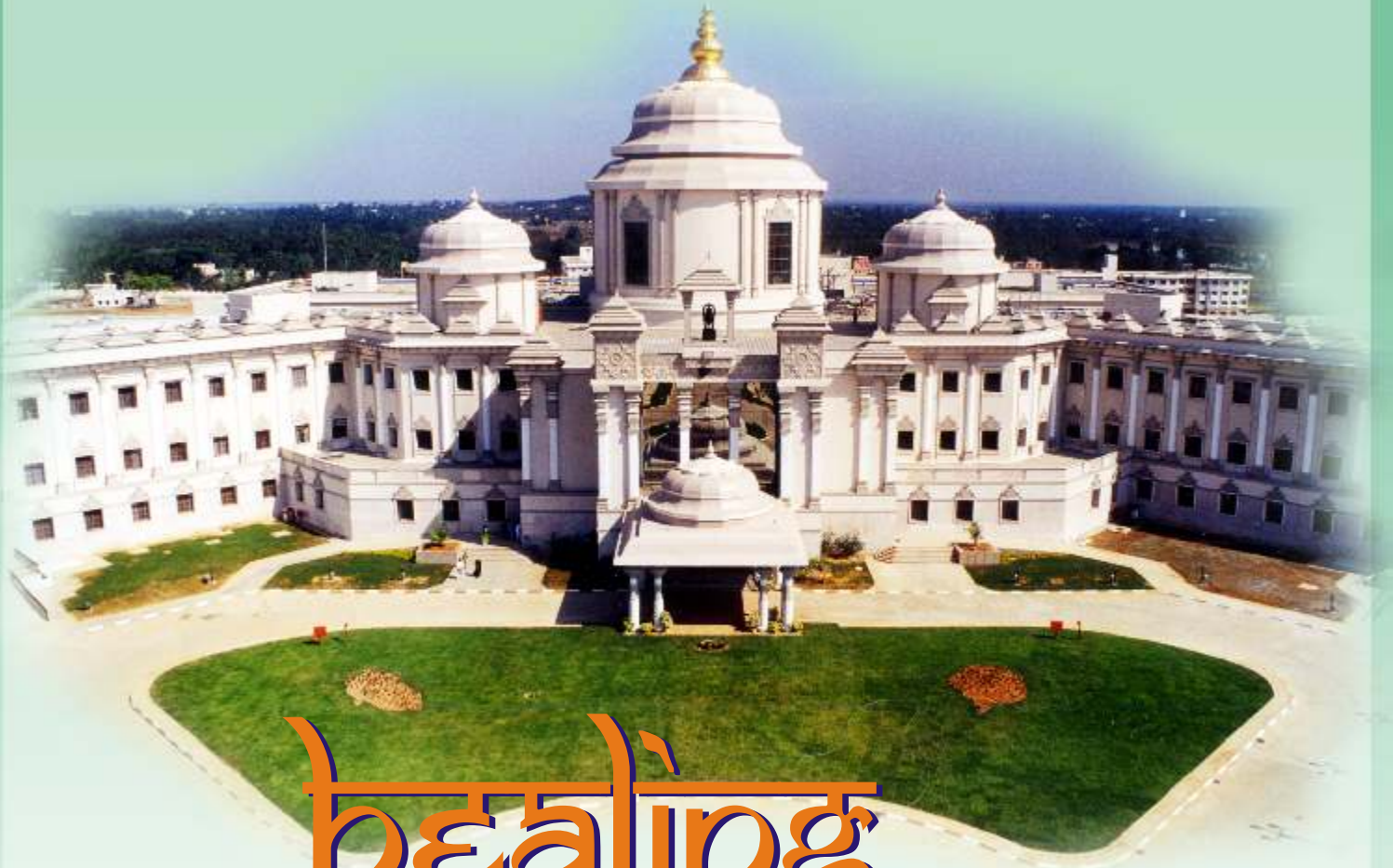




HEART TO HEART



RADIO SAI LISTENER'S JOURNAL



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COVER STORY

**Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences,
Bangalore**

VOL 2 ISSUE 2

15 January 2004



PRANAMS AT THE LOTUS FEET

Journal

developed by

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



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A group of approximately ten children and two adults are standing outdoors in front of a white building and palm trees. The children are dressed in colorful clothing, including a green shirt, a blue floral dress, a pink dress, and a purple skirt. They are all smiling and looking towards the camera. The background shows lush greenery and a clear sky.

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Between You and Us

Dear Reader,

Sai Ram and Greetings from Prashanti Nilayam. First of all, we must thank you from the bottom of our Hearts, not only for the wonderful and most encouraging mails that we keep on receiving, in larger numbers we must say, but also for various other expressions of love and encouragement. Lately, not a day passes without some listener or the other dropping in to say thanks, give a gift, have a chat, or offer suggestions. This is simply overwhelming. We have people visiting us from America, South Africa, Singapore and Malaysia, to name just a few countries. Recently, a devotee listener from America left behind a box of chocolates! No doubt some of our younger members do confess to having a sweet tooth as they say, but what really touches us immensely is the love that is shown to us. So many people are offering to help us in so many different ways, and what can be more satisfying than that? It is as if Swami Himself is coming over here to say, "Keep it up boys, but don't forget to do better!" Yes, for us, everyday's best has to be bettered on the following day. And what is nice is that more and more people are now beginning to talk of, "Our Radio Sai". For us, that is the ultimate tribute. If you recall, in one of our earliest issues we talked about e-satsangh. Frankly, we did not think it would come true so fast. By the way, this news might interest you.

Many devotees told us and also wrote to us: "For heaven's sake, why don't you also print HEART TO HEART? Not all of us can download easily, and we would like hard copies." We were wondering what to do about it, because we certainly do not have either the time or the resources to get into the printing business. But you know what? Swami has set that up for us! A devotee has come forward to print a limited number of copies, and if all goes well, INSAHALLAH as they say, these copies may even soon become available in the book stores in Prashanti Nilayam and Brindavan!

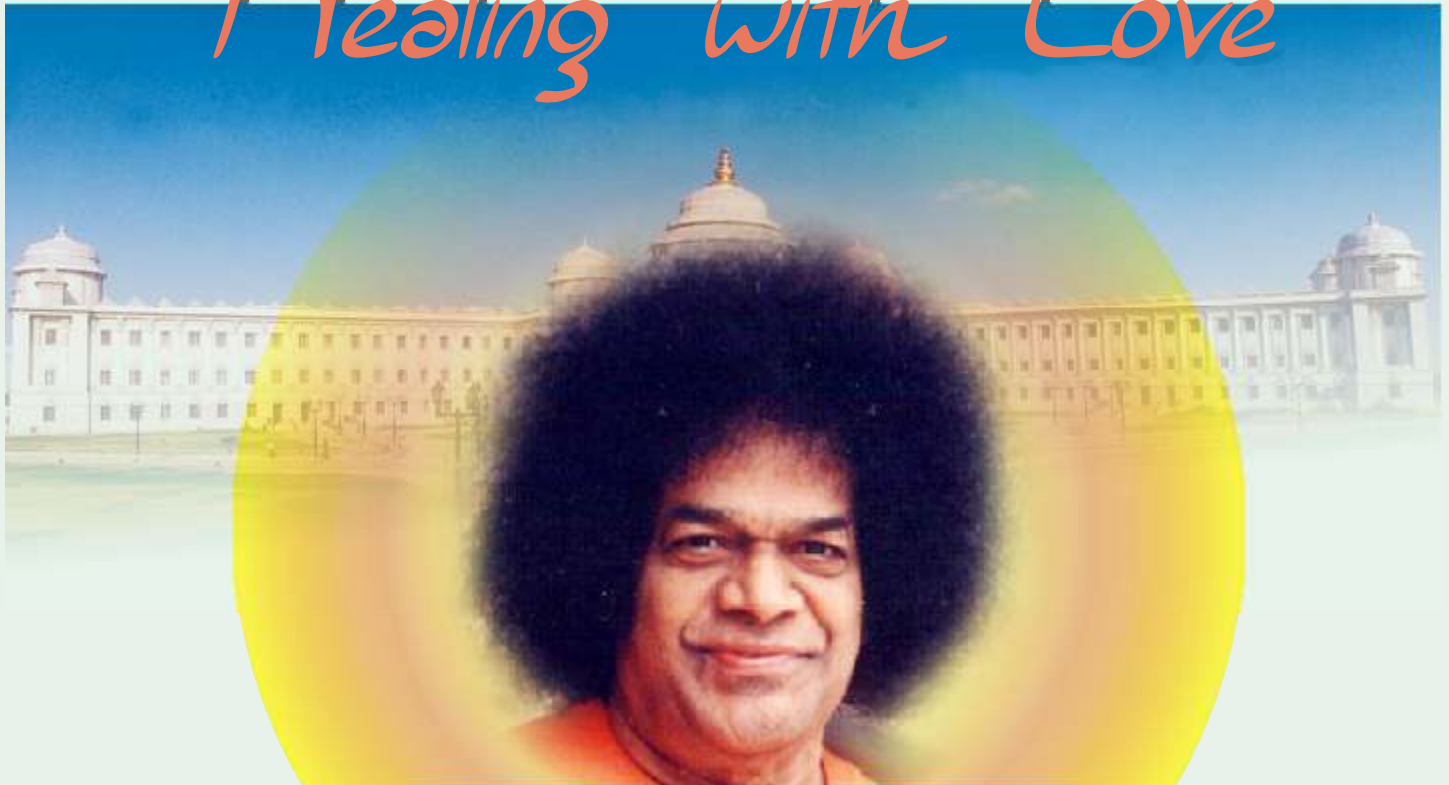
Now on to an important article in this issue. It is about Swami's Super Speciality Hospital in Whitefield Bangalore. They say that the Taj Mahal is a temple of love. May be architecturally, but the Whitefield Hospital is the true Temple of Love. Along with its sister hospital in Puttaparthi, it is not only a Temple of Love but also of Healing. The Taj, beautiful though it is, is but a tomb but this Temple is all about life and living. When you go through the feature story here, do not just glance at the pictures but reflect deeply on what it all means.

The other day, I heard a leading TV personality say in a talk-show in America, "You know, I always tell myself: 'The world is so full of suffering. What can I do to make at least a bit of one day in the life of one such suffering person that would make that person forget suffering and experience joy, even if it be for a short while? I have received so much from so many. What am I giving back, if at all?' This is the sort of question we all ought to be asking ourselves all the time, if we claim we are really Swami's devotees.

Swami built a temple with brick and mortar in Whitefield. But all of us also are temples built by that same God, cell by cell. And all of us can become [moving] Temples of Love and Compassion, if only we choose to. But are we considering that option? Think about it!

God bless and Jai Sai Ram.
SGH TEAM

Healing with Love



Healing with Love



The Sri Sathya Sai Institute Of Higher Medical Sciences,
Bangalore

*“Yada yada hi dharmasya glaanir bhavati bhaarata/
Abhyudhaanam adharmasya tadaatmaanam srjaamyaham/
Paritraanaaya sadhuunaam vinashaaya cha dushkrutaam/
Dharma sansthapanaarthaaya sambhavaami yuge yuge//”*

“Whenever there is a decay of dharma and rise of adharm, then I embody myself, O Bharata. For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked and for the establishment of dharma I am born age after age.”

These are the words of Lord Krishna to Arjuna on the battlefield of kurukshetra ages ago but today in the modern

context, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba says:

“Love all Serve all”

Apparently the words may seem out of context when placed together but what is apparent is not what is the intent. One has to See Always Inside to understand the import. In the past wickedness was limited to a few individuals and could be eliminated by eliminating them physically which is what the Lord did in his earlier incarnations. But man today has both good and evil within him and were the lord to follow his earlier procedure he would be very lonely. It is for this reason that Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, said that in the present age the wicked would not be destroyed but would be transformed. For affecting this transformation, he uses the most powerful of all weapons LOVE.

Bhagawan Baba, in his munificence has presented mankind with three gifts. Of education, health and water. The first: to enable man to earn his livelihood in this world, the second: to enable him not only to earn his livelihood in this world but also sustain him for more sacred work and the third: water, called the elixir of life, for it is the most important of all elements to sustain life.

“*Vaidyo narayano harihi*” (the doctor is Lord Narayana and Lord Hari) is an aphorism from ancient Indian culture that places a doctor on par with God. In the western system of medicine a man is considered a doctor only after he has taken the “Hippocratic Oath” named after the Greek Physician



Healing with Love



Hippocrates who is considered the father of modern medicine. As part of this oath is the following line:

“To hold him who has taught me this art as

equal to my parents and to live my life in regard his offspring as equal to my brothers in male lineage and to teach them this art - if they desire to learn it - Without Fee And Covenant”

Unfortunately words do not transform themselves into action. Health care is one of the most expensive fields both to learn and to practice. It is a rare doctor who would *diagnose* an ailment free of cost, let alone treat and cure a malady. As torrents to douse the conflagration of professional prejudices and economic considerations, in which laymen are charred, came the blessing of the Lord in the form of two Temples of



Healing. The Sri Sathya Sai Institute of higher medical sciences, Prashantigram, 12 years ago in 1991 and the The Sri Sathya Sai Institute of

higher medical sciences, Whitefield in the year 2001. They are the manifestation of Bhagawan Baba's Will that free health care should be provided to the poorest of the poor totally free of cost.

THE PHILOSOPHY:

“Paropakaraartham idam shareeram”



This is an ancient upanishadic tenet that says, “This body is meant for the service of others”. The SSSIHMS embodies this very spirit in its

entirety. The hospital is based on the service motive and this alone is the inspiration and its sustenance. Medical care is an issue of both compassion and



finance. Two apparently diametrically opposite ends of the circle of life, yet intricately interrelated in the modern paradigm, one emotional and the other rational. Though painted in a different color the past was in no way far removed. “First do no harm” is the primary objective of every true doctor and this is reflected in every moment of the existence of SSSIHMS.

The touch is said to be one of the most powerful ways of communication. Add to this a smile and then an act of understanding...A smile, a reassuring touch, an act of understanding, compassion... all these are not exceptions but the norm in this Temple of healing. Starting with the lowest orderly to the heads of departments, harsh words are a rarity when it comes to serving the patient. It is the opinion and experience of many that nothing can be earned without first losing something. But when one enters the aegis of SSSIHMS, all that one has to lose is oneself. At every step everything is provided to the patient absolutely free of cost with complete redress of all problems minor or major. The smile of satisfaction of the patient when he is discharged from the hospital, the smile of trust of a child when entering the operation theatres for surgery, the smile of reassurance of the doctor when he treats a patient...and the list goes on.



Healing with Love

The undercurrent of the entire hospital, the source of its sustenance is a simple yet powerful emotion Love. It is the greatest of all weapons and the solution to all maladies. It is the rope that binds different minds to one goal. How else is it possible to run such a mammoth institution whose foundations are in God's love for Humanity but through love?

*"Na tapaamsi na teerthaanaam na
saastraani japanicha/
Samsaara saagarodhaare sajjanam
sevanam vina//"*

Not by penance nor by pilgrimage nor by study of scriptures nor by chanting can one cross the ocean of life. One can achieve it only by serving the poor. This is the ultimate truth as evidenced by the lives of great men. Not only in the field of medicine but in all other walks of life.

THE EDIFICE:

The SSSIHMS in whitefield, Bangalore was inaugurated by the



Prime Minister of India, Sri Atal Behari Vajpayee on the 19th of January 2001. This tertiary care hospital incorporates some of the best technical facilities and provides high

quality free medical care and surgical treatment. It is built on 52.26 acres of land donated by the government of Karnataka.

The work on the building commenced in September 1999 and was completed in October 2000. The hospital was officially commissioned on the 19th of January 2001. The hospital was a turnkey project built by the ECC (Larsen and Toubro construction division) with all the latest hi-tech civil, structural, mechanical, electrical and instrumentation works including aesthetic finishing. All the electromechanical services that

make the buildings "intelligent" along with a gamut of systems including water, sanitary, HVAC, elevator, fire protection, security and surveillance systems, landscaping and horticultural works were included and executed according to plan. The contractors coordinated with BNA agencies for internal telecommunication facilities, Bhoruka medical gas agencies, various medical equipment suppliers including architecture and medical consultants.



The hospital has two separate complexes. First, the Screening Block, where the patients are screened initially, who after examination and registration will proceed to the main hospital, next the main block with the rest of the services. The hospital is shaped in the form of the alphabet "K". The spine of the letter contains the specialized diagnostics, laboratories and theaters on different floors, while the arms contain the wards and Out Patient Departments also on different floors. The elevation is of three levels, the ground floor, first and second floors from the front and has a basement in the rear, which

makes it four levels in the rear. The electricity and uninterrupted power supply systems are located behind the hospital. The pressurized



oxygen that needs to be pumped all over the hospital is stored in a separate tank away from the hospital building. The hospital has its own water treatment plant and incinerator making it comprehensive in every sense of the term.

Apart from the functional aspects of the hospital, which are world standards, the aesthetics of construction make it look really like a vast temple rather than a hospital. The ambiance is so designed as to create in the viewer a sense of awe, reverence and humility and most of all, gratitude to the most Merciful

Healing with Love

Lord, Bhagawan Baba, who is granting the world premium, tertiary health care free of cost. The central dome is 23 mts in diameter and reaches more than a 100 feet from ground level. It is an awe-inspiring sight with the cupola supported by eight massive pillars. Stained glass widows on the walls of the dome act as skylights throwing multi hued designs on the polished granite floor and the sandstone walls. The primary emotion that any one experiences on entering this area is an overwhelming sense of peace and tranquility. This is the beginning of the cure...for one is in the precincts of the Temple of Healing.

THE SPECIALTIES:

The SSSIHMS Whitefield has two main specialties, cardiac sciences that include cardiology and cardio thoracic and vascular surgery and the neurosciences that include neurology and neurosurgery.

	Cardiac	Neuro
Operation theatres	8	4
Cath labs	4	1
Intensive care units Pre and Post op.	2	2
Coronary Care Unit	1	0
Total no of beds	330	

The hospital is also has a full laboratory facility with the latest upgradeable equipment which can be interfaced with other systems. The various departments of the hospital are located as follows:

Level	Departments
Basement	Administration, staff canteen, medical records department, the laundry, the Central sterile services department, the central stores, the medical stores, the dietary department, the bio- medical and engineering services department.
Ground floor	The Cardiac out patient department (north wing), Neuro out patient department (South wing), the emergency Room, Physiotherapy, radiology including, CT, MRI, Nuclear medicine, X-Ray, Gamma Camera, the neuro consulting rooms, the laboratories including bio-chemistry, serology, haematology, and microbiology and the blood bank.
First floor	The pre- operative ward, The coronary care unit, the cardiac Cath labs, the Cardio Thoracic and Vascular Surgery operation theatres, Intensive care units, the post operative ward, the Hospital information management system network and server rooms.
Second floor	The pre- operative ward, The neuro intensive care unit, the neuro Cath lab, the neurosurgery operation theatres, Intensive care units, the neuro post operative intensive care unit, the neuro post operative ward and the office of the nursing superintendent.
Separate areas	Electricity, UPS and air-conditioning, water treatment, HVAC, sanitation, incinerator, generators, staff quarters.

You have just been taken on a tour of the hospital. You must have appreciated the grand architecture and the great facilities...But what sets apart this temple of healing is that feeling of transformation that it has brought about and is still bringing about in all those who are associated with it : the people involved in the construction, the patients, their relatives, the doctors, the staff and the continuous stream of dignitaries who come to see with their own eyes ,this wonderful Temple of Love.....

More in the next few pages.....



The Divine Will

The story of how the Bangalore facility was put up.

By
Satish Nayak

The author was involved in the setting up of the project

Go beyond credible human limits and the presence of the Divine is made evident at every stage.

It was at the end of May 1999 that the Government of Karnataka requested Baba When a project is the result of a Divine Will, normal human limitations and norms do not seem to apply to its execution. The speed and mode to accept the grant of the 52-acre plot of land on which the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences has been constructed. All procedures were completed in time and it seemed the Government's red tape was on a 'double fast-forwarded'! On Sunday August 8, 1999, with Baba's blessings, a ceremony happened at the South West corner of the plot, when devotees and volunteers joined in a prayer session.

The formal 'Bhoomi Pooja' [ceremony of beginning a construction] and the laying of the north-east corner foundation stone were carried out on Thursday September 2, 1999. The doyen of the trust's construction engineers, Col S P Joga Rao was there to cut the first sod.

In a project of this size, in the normal course, the following minimum steps would have been taken in sequence:

- ⇒ Concept
- ⇒ Architectural and functional designs and drawings
- ⇒ Structural specifications, designs and drawings
- ⇒ Project estimates



- ⇒ Tendering and contracting
- ⇒ Mobilization and start of execution

All these activities were telescoped, and many of them were carried out in parallel. A good part of these activities continued during the execution phase of the project also. This was possible by the divinely inspired spirit of cooperation among the consultants, architects, contractors and suppliers, all of whom took on the project as a joint and a united endeavor. Each party involved had, no doubt, its own limited objectives, but the one over-riding objective was to please Baba by completing the work to the required standard within the specified time. There was a lesson that all those involved learnt: Unity in Diversity i.e., diverse individual objectives, but one sole unified over-riding objective can produce a synergy, which can extend usually accepted limitations beyond expectations.

Two prime contractors were chosen: one for the main hospital complex and the other, for the residential complex. For the main hospital complex, under the prime contractor, there were as many as 21 nominated subcontractors in 29 contracts, in addition to a myriad of other sub-contractors. Directly contracted suppliers of materials and equipment numbered 421. Inputs from all these sources had to be received strictly in time and order of sequence so that the project schedule could be maintained. One could see the commitment of all these parties to the common cause; each of them gladly bent over backward to fulfill their obligations. Such commitment, one could clearly see, was possible only because the Divine Hand was guiding them.

During price and schedule negotiations with all these diverse parties coming from all over India and abroad and belonging to various religions, one could sense and see a common theme: they wanted to participate in this unique humanitarian endeavor, even if it meant foregoing some profit, or going that extra mile to meet the requirements of the project. There were, no doubt, humanly created problems like strikes, transport problems and power shortages in various parts of the country from where items had been sourced, but none of them were such that could not be compensated by human effort, aided by Baba's Grace. There was hardly a case where alternative sourcing had to be done to cover contract failure.

It was a case of: 'Without God on our side, we are nothing; with God on our side, we are everything'.

A Journey from Blue to Pink

Dr SRMohanty

The author is Junior Consultant, Department of Cardio-thoracic Vascular Surgery, Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences, Bangalore

How does it feel to be a proud mother after nine long months of pregnancy? How does it feel when the newborn smiles back at you spontaneously? But what if the child's lips turn blue? What if the doctor tells you that your little baby has a complex heart disease that will need corrective surgery at the earliest - at a price over Rs 300,000 [6,380 US dollars] and with over 50 per cent risk to life?

That's exactly what happened to Mrs Mohan Das, a labourer by profession. This was the scene she had to face, barely two days after the birth of the child. Having lost hope, she decided to accept her fate. Then came the news of a charitable institution at Bangalore, founded by Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba offering services in free of cost. She made the journey to Bangalore.

Her 18-day-old baby weighing just three kilos was diagnosed as having d-transposition of Great Arteries, Intact Ventricular Septum, Patent Foramen Ovae, Patent Ductus Arteriosus, Type II Coronary pattern and well preserved left ventricular function. The baby was scheduled for Arterial Switch Operation, considered as one of the most complicated types in the practice of neonatal cardiac surgery.

Post operatively the baby was nursed on Infant Warmer with mechanical ventilation and inotropic support. Gradually she was weaned off ventilator support and was extubated after 72 hours. The inotropes were slowly tapered and the baby made an uneventful recovery. The parents were impressed with the humaneness of the team involved in treating their child. They had no words to express their gratitude. On the way back home with the baby in their arm and with a smile on her pink lips, believed that their little one had received a second life by the grace of Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

The baby in an Infant Warmer just after surgery...



...and all smiles now



The story of Ameer Jaan



Ameer Jaan, a 51-year-old man came to this hospital with a complex heart ailment. He had a damaged aortic valve along with blocked coronary arteries. He was successfully operated and he went back happy and satisfied with the care given to him by the medical team. The entire episode has its significance.

Ameer Jaan, a small electrical shop owner, is the only breadwinner of a big family of five members. Struck by a complex heart ailment, he was unable to work. The family faced a financial crunch. He initially went to a local doctor who kept giving him medicines for his ailment, assuring him of a complete cure. Each visit cost him a good sum of money. But, he didn't get any relief. He was totally drained, financially and emotionally. A ray of hope appeared in the form of a distant relative, who told him about the free hospital run by Sri Sathya Sai Baba. He was skeptical. He wondered how a hospital could run without charging patients in these times. Is the care provided up to the mark? Is there any hidden motive? He decided to give it a try.

He said his first visit was memorable. His registration and laboratory tests were totally hassle-free. He was taken care with so much love and compassion that he was amazed and he wondered if such care was given in any of the elite hospitals of the city? Moreover, not a single penny was asked from him. He was admitted in the hospital and thoroughly investigated.

After a battery of tests by the cardiologists, he was diagnosed as having calcific aortic stenosis with coronary Artery disease - a malady, that had reduced the size of his aortic valve and also blocked the major coronary arteries supplying blood to the heart. Given his condition, surgery was the only answer. The aortic valve needed to be replaced by a prosthetic valve made out of metal, which is imported from the USA. He also needed to undergo Coronary Artery Bypass Grafting [CABG] for his blocked coronary vessels.

Ameer Jaan was successfully operated by a team of doctors of the cardiac surgery department. The entire procedure was performed after putting the patient on cardiopulmonary bypass using the heart lung machine and after a cardioplegic arrest of the heart. Apart from replacing his damaged aortic valve with a prosthetic heart valve, three bypasses were constructed on his heart. He was kept in the intensive care unit for 48 hours and transferred to a ward. He went home on the eighth day fully satisfied and happy.

This operation would have cost him more than Rs 125,000 [2,700 US dollars] anywhere else. It would have been impossible for a man like him to meet the cost. He would have had to sell his shop or property. But then, what after that?

The small ray of hope that appeared for Ameer Jaan one day has given him and his family a new lease on life. One among the millions of human beings blessed by Baba.

Dr S P Manoj Kumar MS, Mch

Department of Cardio-thoracic Vascular Surgery.

Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences, Bangalore



Gratitude and Appreciation

A letter to the Hospital Administrator

⇒ Prithvi Pani

The author underwent treatment at the hospital

I deem it a pleasure in writing this letter, in grateful acknowledgment of all the medical services rendered to me during my stay at the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences, Bangalore, from July 25th to August 2nd 2001 during which I had undergone neuro surgery for the removal of a tumour [pituitary adenoma].

My nine days stay at the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences was a divine holiday. In fact I never had the feeling that I was a patient. In a surgery it is fear that haunts you more than the diseases. But here I must admit that from the time of my admission the fear had gone and a subtle peace of mind transcended on me. This state of mind is to be experienced to be believed.

Although I have profound faith in God, the moment I entered this divine medical centre, I began to admire Baba for his selfless service to mankind, through his philosophy of 'Love all, Serve all'. Every person admitted to this Institute, however poor or rich, is taken care of without any discrimination.

The medical service is supreme. A missionary zeal can be seen

in every individual serving this Institute and this clearly shows the greatness of this Divine soul, Sri Sathya Sai Baba who infuses such dynamism into every person serving here.

In today's medical profession it is rare to come across a noble soul like Dr A S Hegde, who is the Head of the Department Neuro Sciences here. Dr Hegde and his team are rendering yeoman service to the cause of neuro patients who come here from all parts of the country.

In my short association with Dr Hegde, I have found him to be a person of great humanity, patience and one who induces confidence in his patients. He is also a very popular and greatly sought after neuro-surgeon. May God bless him and his family. May he also train more such good surgeons, who will be proud to say they were associated with Dr Hegde.

During my stay, I had the opportunity to interact with most of the patients and their attendants, in my ward. I noticed that they were from different religious backgrounds. Without any exception, all of them agreed, that this place was a Temple of Medication.

My family and I will always be indebted to this Institute.

With deep gratitude and warm regards.

They came, They saw.....

What is health care? Health care is not just medical care. Medical care is one of the components of what you all are doing. Actually health care is medical care, education and nutrition. Health care happens only when all these three are combined. You are doing that in both Puttaparthi and here. You are treating the mind. You are providing good water. You are doing all the three. An anti ballistic missile has been launched by Bhagavan against poverty: Through education, water and healthcare.

Shri A P J Abdul Kalam,
President of India

Speaking when he was Professor, Anna University, Chennai
on the 19th of January 2002, the first Anniversary of SSIHMS, B'lore



The Sri Satya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences is a wonderful contribution of Bhagawan Sri Satya Sai Baba. To have a free and modern hospital for the poor people of India was a dream and pledge of our leaders in the freedom struggle. This is a realization of the dream of Gandhiji and Jawaharlal Nehru. It represents our spiritual heritage. One feels proud after going round it. This can be a model for all the developing countries as well as the developed world. The developed world has these facilities but not for the poor. May this example be followed by others. It is not only a medical but a spiritual contribution of India. With respectful Pranams to revered Swami.

Sri Kishan Kanth ,
Late Vice President of India
In the visitor's book at SSIHMS

A truly remarkable achievement! A one of a kind combination of hi-tech state of the art medical facility offering free top of the line treatment for free to the masses of people who would never normally have such a chance in life. An awe-inspiring achievement! Thank you on behalf of Mankind! With kindest personal regards.

Michael Nobel ,
Chairman, Nobel Family Society
Board Member, World space corporation
In the visitor's book



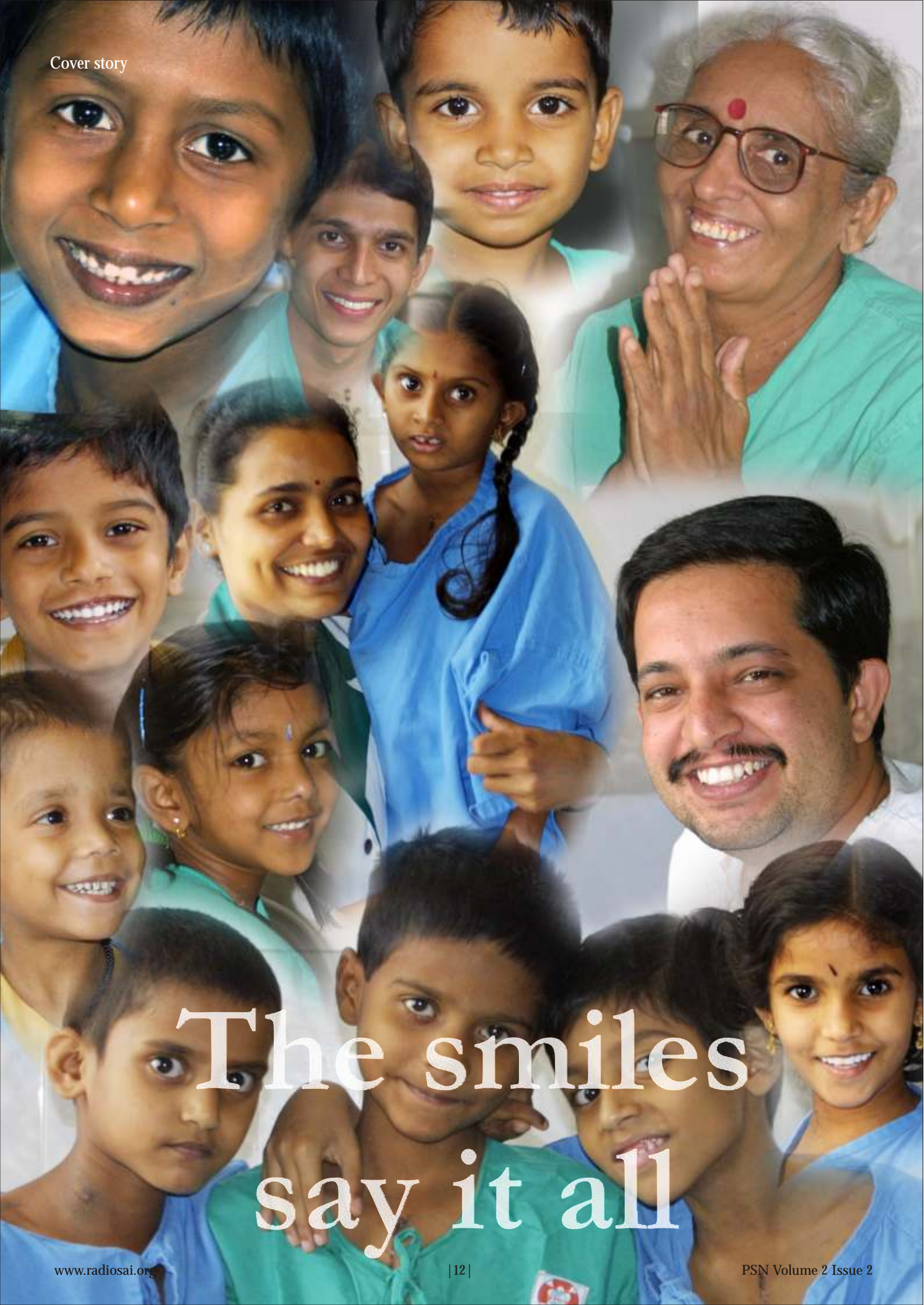
I just saw the hospital and asked the person who was taking me around, " Is it a hospital or a temple?" The impression I get is, yes, it is a hospital. There are patients though the structure is like a temple. Everywhere we see Baba's photographs. Can every hospital, every institution in this country be a cohesive model of both a hospital and a temple? That should be our goal.

Dr. Gowri Devi
Director, National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences
On the 19th of January, 2002

The magnificent, world-class facility we see before us is an embodiment of Baba's great vision. The outpouring of the kindness and the healing energy so evident here today is a gift Bhagavan Baba in his boundless love shares with all of us.

Dr. Noah Samara
Chairman and CEO, Worldspace corporation
On the 19th of January, 2002





The smiles say it all

The Divine and the Cosmos

Trees produce fruits for the enjoyment of others. Rivers carry water to meet the needs of others. Similarly, cows offer their milk to humans. However, man, forgetting that he has been endowed with a body for rendering help to others, is immersed in selfish concerns and the pursuit of narrow ends. He does not exhibit even a thousandth part of the spirit of selfless help to others shown by the trees, rivers or cows.

From sunrise to sunset man today is steeped in selfish pursuits, and the problems of humanity stem from this selfishness. Man does not even live like a human. It is only when man becomes truly human, that he can experience the Divine. What you think exists is, truly speaking, not real. What you think does not exist, is the Reality. God is the only Reality and there is nothing in the world not pervaded by God. God is immanent in the entire Cosmos. The Universe does not exist apart from God.

In every object (*padaartham*) there is a Divine element (*paraartham*). Without this Divine basis, nothing can exist. In this Universe, there is no material object without a Divine basis, no living thing without the vital force and no inert substance without Consciousness.

It is usually supposed that the natural sciences are concerned only with matter, while metaphysics is concerned with things Spiritual. But the physical and the metaphysical are inextricably related to each other. The uniqueness of the *Upanishads* lies in proclaiming this basic unity. Many imagine that there is no connection between the physical world and the realm of the Spirit. This is a grievous mistake. The Divine is the base and the physical world is sustained by it. Thus, the Cosmos is the synthesis of these two, Spirit and matter.

To ignore the physical Universe and remain preoccupied with the Spirit is a form of narrow-mindedness. You have to develop the conviction that the Divine and the Universe are intimately interrelated. If the phenomenal world does not exist, one cannot understand anything nor cognize the Truth. The Universe is what helps in distinguishing the Real from the unreal. It is impossible to accomplish anything, if the world is discarded. Basing yourself on the physical world, you have to aspire for realizing the Divine. If you want to realize the Divinity in man, you have to first understand the nature of the human state.

The true goal of human life is to discover the cosmic unity of Consciousness and matter. The best way to achieve this is to lead a life of righteousness and to share the fruits of such a life with others. One's true goal should not change with time; moreover, one should pursue the goal with firm resolve. A righteous life develops Inner Vision, allowing one to perceive Unity in diversity.

In this Kali age, owing to the various perverse influences present, people are prone to ignore the prompting of Inner Conscience and act in response to external impressions. This is not correct. They must instead develop Inner Vision to achieve a balanced attitude to the world as merely perceived

through the senses and the world as it really is, that is, as the ephemeral superstructure resting on the Eternal Divine Principle. One must learn to function in the world and yet not get bound by it that is the meaning of balance.



The 14th of January is observed in Prashanti Nilayam as *Sankaranthi*. This is an important festival in India, and on this day, what happens in Prashanti Nilayam is that Bhagavan Baba distributes Prizes to those who participated in the Annual Sports and Cultural Festival that takes place three days earlier on January 11th. If you recall, it was on one such occasion, in 1999 to be precise, that Swami revealed the grievous injury that He took upon Himself to save some students who were attempting dare-devil stunts on sports day. What exactly is *Sankaranthi* and what is its significance? That is what I shall discuss presently.

Let us start with the motion of the Earth around the Sun. The axis of rotation of the Earth is tilted at an angle of about 22 degrees with respect to the plane on which the Earth moves around the Sun. This is the reason why we have the seasons. By the way, Pole star is directly in line with the axis of rotation, in the North of course.

Now when the Earth goes round, there are four important days; these are: 1) Vernal equinox which falls on March 20, 2) Summer solstice which falls on June 21, 3) Autumnal equinox which falls on September 23, and 4) Winter solstice which falls on December 21. In what way are these days special?

Let us start with Summer solstice which falls on June 21. In the northern hemisphere, this is the longest day. And in a place in Norway, on that day the Sun never sets! In fact, lots of tourists go there to celebrate that day. On that day, the Sun is exactly over the Tropic of Cancer, its highest point in the northern hemisphere. From June to August, the Sun starts moving towards the southern hemisphere, and on August 23 which is the Autumnal equinox, the Sun is right over the Equator all set to cross over to the southern hemisphere.

On now to Winter solstice which falls on December 21. This is the longest day in the southern hemisphere for the Sun is now directly over the Tropic of Capricorn. In the northern hemisphere, however, this is the longest night. From December to March, the Sun starts moving towards the

Equator, and for people in the northern hemisphere this means the return of the Sun to the north. On March 20, the Sun is exactly over the equator, poised to travel towards the Tropic of Cancer.

Focus now on December 20th. This is the day when the Sun starts its northward journey. For people in the northern hemisphere this is a moment of joy, because the long dark nights would finally be over. The Sun would be back, and winter would give way to spring. This business of solstice, equinox etc., follows regularly year after year. Enter now a human error.

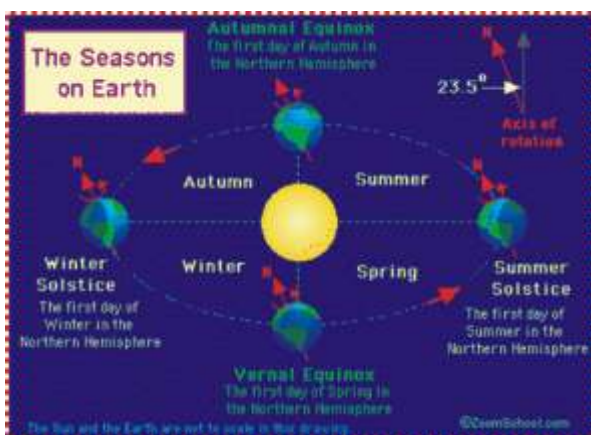
We all know that the calendar year is 365 $\frac{1}{4}$ days. Actually we close the year at 365 days and add one more day every four years to correct for the shortfall that is how we have the leap years. Thousands of years ago, people were not that accurate and took the solar year to be 365 days. This meant that every year they were making an error of $\frac{1}{4}$ day, and over centuries this added up. Long ago when ancient Hindus formulated the almanac, the Sun actually started its northern trip on January 14th. This was the day of the Winter solstice then. However, people hung on to the notion that the year had 365 days and this is what caused the problem. Over the centuries, the day of return moved away from January 14th; it was now much earlier. For a long time, people did not realise this, and all sorts of errors crept into the calendar. But finally they woke up.

The long and short of all this is that in 1582, Pope Gregory reset the calendar. That is the calendar we now follow and it is called the Gregorian calendar. With this resetting, Winter solstice now falls on December 21, the correct day. But those who have not corrected the calendar follow the old date, January 14th in India. In fact, this has happened even with respect to Christmas. In the State of Kerala, we have Christians who came in the third century A.D. They are known as Syrian Christians and they celebrate Christmas some time in January as, I believe, followers of the Russian Orthodox also do.

In short, *Sankaranthi* is linked to the return of the Sun to the northern hemisphere from the south. January 14th, the day on which it is celebrated was the correct date thousands of years ago; now, it is not, though the celebrations, in keeping with ancient traditions are still held on that day.

Let us now look at the spiritual implications. Interestingly, deeper significance has been attached to this event by all ancient societies, the pagans of Europe for example. What about India, and what does Swami have to say about it?

The return of the Sun to the north was referred to by ancient Indians as *Uttarayana*. Swami says:



Ayana means journeying. When the apparent movement of the Sun is northwards, the period is called Uttarayana [Uttara means north]. When the apparent movement is southward, it is called Dakshinayana [Dakshina means south]. The period of Uttarayana is marked by brightness, peace, rejoicing, fearlessness, and purity. Dakshinayana is characterised by darkness, absence of peace, fear, and distress.

In the *Gita*, Krishna makes a passing reference to these two journeys of the Sun, and based on this people began to assume that if one died or gave up the body in the *Uttarayana* period then one got liberated while if one died in the *Dakshinayana* period it meant continued bondage or rebirth. Brightness meant heaven while darkness meant something not desirable. What gave greater credence to this belief was the famous story of Bhishma of *Mahabharatha* who held on to life and gave up his body only after the onset of *Uttarayana*. But is all this belief really true? I mean is one really liberated when one dies when the Sun is up north? If it were, then there would be a strange anomaly for people in Australia, South Africa, Latin America and so on, because they too would get liberated even though for them the Sun was not in their hemisphere! Obviously, this cannot be true, and there must be something deeper in all this. What is that and what is the correct way to interpret what Krishna says? Swami has given the answer. He says:

Uttarayana is no doubt the period when there is no dot of cloud or whiff of fog contaminating the vast dome and the Sun shines in all his glory. This is the gross meaning. But there is a subtle meaning too. The Heart is the Inner sky. There the Sun that shines is Buddhi or Intelligence. When the cloud of ignorance, the fog of egoism, and the smoke of attachment hover in the Inner sky, the Sun of Intelligence is hidden and things look murky. The Uttarayana of the Heart is when the Inner sky is clear of all these, and the Sun of Intelligence shines in full splendour.

Those who pass away in the other half of the year, the Dakshinayana, have the opposite destiny; then the Heart is beset with smoke, fog and cloud. The Sun is hidden, and its effulgence has no splendour. The real Uttarayana is when you crave for the thought of the Lord and the company of Glory.

In effect therefore, dying in *Uttarayana* means drawing the last breath with the thought of the Lord in one's Mind. We pray: From darkness lead us to Light. Indeed, when light fills the Heart, the time of death does not really matter. That is the real message of *Sankaranthi*.

Jai Sai Ram

G.VENKATARAMAN



The Good and the Bad

DEAR READER,

Continuing our feature Getting Spiritually Better, we offer below the seventh installment. 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

In this world, we see both good and bad. People sometimes wonder: "If everything came from God, why is there bad at all? Why isn't everything good?" This is a legitimate doubt. But there is an answer to this 'problem'.

It all depends on one's perspective. A truly evolved soul sees everything as a play of the Lord. Not only that; he sees the Lord Himself playing all the roles; thus, in this viewpoint, even a so-called evil person is merely the Lord in disguise. In other words, since everything is the Lord and the Lord alone, nothing is bad QED. It is as simple as that this is the philosophy of monism or *Advaitam*, as Swami refers to it.

Most of us, indeed, 99.999999% of the people are nowhere near *Advaitam* or this state of Absolute Oneness, being immersed in the world of duality or pairs of opposites. In this perception, there is 'good' on the one hand and 'bad' on the other. However, what seems 'bad' is not really bad; it is a case of something that has not 'evolved'. This brings in the question of evolution, innate tendencies [*Gunās*] and other such factors. These points need some elaboration.

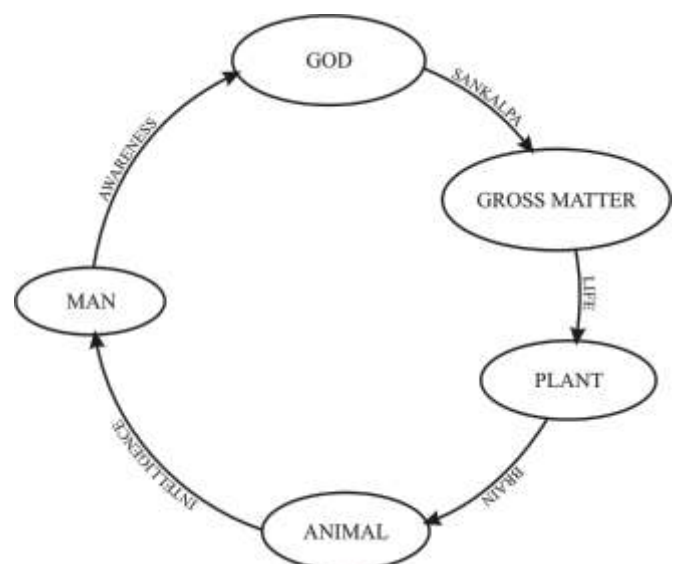
Years ago, they used to have what was called the Hall of Mirrors in amusement parks in America. In this Hall were placed a large number of mirrors, all of which would reflect only distorted images. When one stood before these mirrors and looked at them, one would see a large number of faces, each appearing different. This would of course cause plenty of amusement to children, because they would be seeing themselves with so many different forms as it were. The person was just one, but the variations in the reflections were many that really is the point. This we must keep in mind, when we examine the Lord's Grand Master Plan.

It is important to appreciate that there IS a Grand Master Plan behind Creation. Many scientists seem to feel that the Universe is without a purpose, and that evolution of the species is the result of a series of random mutations of the DNA, modulated by the principle of the Survival of the Fittest. This is far from true. Creation does have a purpose. As Swami says, "There was no one to know who I was; so I

separated Myself from Myself in order to Love Myself!" This may sound a bit mysterious but Swami has provided the necessary clarification.

Basically, there is a cycle. First, God created inanimate matter. From this came the plants; the important thing about plants is that they have life, as compared to inanimate, gross matter [like stones, for example]. Plants do not have a brain. Animals came next in evolution; they have a brain, with limited capabilities of course. After this came the human being, who is vastly superior to animals because, among other things, he has intelligence. This does not end the evolution sequence. If one were to ask, "What next?", there is a clear answer. Man has to become conscious and aware of his origin, Divine origin in fact, and become one with God. One may describe the sequence in evolution in terms of equations as below:

God + *Sankalpa* [Divine will] = Gross Matter.
Gross matter + life = Plant.
Plant + brain = Animal.
Animal + intelligence = Man.



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Man + Awareness = God!

From God we all have come and to God we must return. A plant cannot return to God; an animal cannot directly return to God; a human being alone can, and that is why, Baba often tells us that human birth is a precious gift. The exact phrase He uses is: *Jantunaam Narajanmam Durlabham*, meaning essentially that human birth is rare, and a sacred blessing. Hence, [human] life must not be frittered away in the pursuit of trivial goals and ambitions like the pursuit of creature comforts, sensual pleasures, power, wealth, etc.

OK but what has all this got to do with the co-existence of good and evil? We shall take up that point next. Every human being has come up from many previous lives as lower species. Thus, all humans carry with them tendencies of the past. These tendencies are governed by three basic *Gunas*. *Guna* means basic characteristic or tendency. The three *Gunas* and their importance would be discussed elsewhere but here we note that people come in various shades and types basically because they represent different combinations of the three basic *Gunas*. Suppose a human being still retains some tendencies that the person had in a much earlier birth, say as a tiger; then that person would tend to be cruel. In short, every human being is on some step or the other of the 'evolution ladder'; some are on the higher steps while others are on the lower steps. The person whom we today describe as bad, will be a good person sometime later; it is inevitable. As Baba puts it, a sweet fruit has earlier gone through many stages when it was bitter, sour, and sweet and sour, before it became totally sweet. Hence the saying: "Every Saint has a past, and every sinner has a future."

In a nutshell, everyone is trying to evolve; most people are way behind, while a few are way ahead. The Universe is thus like a huge University cum School complex, in which most of the students are in the lower classes while a handful are at the Ph.D level. Seen in this manner, what seems bad is not really bad; nobody expects a raw fruit to be deliciously sweet; in the same way, a so-called bad person will one day in the future become good himself; that is evolution, and the process of evolving is inevitable. Under natural forces, this evolution might take a very long time, but the individual has the capacity to accelerate his/her personal evolution by self-will. All it requires is firm determination. And the fountainhead of that determination is Love for God.

Meanwhile, every person must realize that he or she must not 'slide down' but go 'up'. What does this mean? Simply this: Every person must try to shake off the chains of past tendencies and evolve towards God. This is what *Sadhana* or spiritual exercise is all about. As Swami often says, *Sadhana* does not mean performing elaborate rituals, mechanically



chanting for hours, etc. It simply means a) getting rid of one's animality, b) living like a refined human being, and c) rising to the level of the Divine. In practical terms it means that one must curb desires, be selfless, practice tolerance, etc.

For one who is able to truly see Oneness in Creation, the different people in the world would all appear like God in disguise. This evolved Soul would say, "There is God coming as a Postman to deliver mail. That is not a Postman, but God coming to say hello and to serve me! Let me take this opportunity and greet God with a nice smile." To a rationalist all this may sound like a lot of stupid make-believe, but there HAVE been noble Souls who have actually gone through life this way. Swami Vivekananda gives many real examples. Our beloved Swami says that the *Rishis* of old were not bothered by wild animals in the forests where they lived because, the Love they radiated captivated the animals. They saw God even in tigers and snakes!

As already mentioned, most of us, however, are immersed in duality; we see good and bad as distinct features; under the

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circumstances, if we associate with 'bad', we would inevitably be dragged down. On the other hand if we shun the 'bad', it would accelerate our return to God.

Incidentally, this resolves an apparent paradox. If everything is good, then what is the meaning of 'avoiding bad company', 'seeing no evil', etc.? It simply means: "For a person immersed in duality, good and bad do have a meaning. Such a person, for rapid spiritual progress, must avoid 'bad' entities meaning, seeing 'bad' things, hearing 'bad' things, and doing 'bad' things. It is like a careful driver not allowing his attention to be distracted by the sights etc., on the two sides of the road. In addition, for the vehicle to move properly, a good driver must have his hands on the steering wheel, and press the accelerator pedal in a controlled manner. In the same way, apart from the don'ts, the spiritual seeker has some do's also. While the don'ts mainly pertain to mind and sense control, the do's relate to performing good actions, being selfless, loving others, expressing gratitude to God, etc."

Man, it is said, is a mixture of the Divine and the animal. Having originally come from God, he is basically Divine. Having evolved from the lower species, he can and does have baser instincts. It is up to him to realize that he must go forward, i.e., to God and not backwards, i.e., towards animality. In this context, Baba draws an important analogy. He says that in a play, the actor must act according to the dress that he wears. For example, if an actor is in the attire of a King, then he is expected to act like a King and not like a clown. The human body too is a 'dress'. Those who wear this dress must act like REAL human beings they should be full of human qualities and virtues like forbearance, the spirit of sacrifice, etc., and not be the embodiments of greed, lust, and jealousy.

Linking to the earlier chapters, the following may be noted:

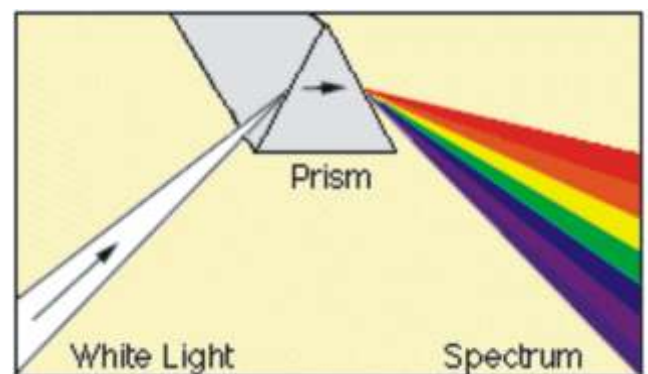
- The great imbalance one sees today in Society is largely the result of individuals failing to be what they really ought to be. Instead of making sure that the fountain of Godliness within controls and drives them, they are permitting the external situation to shape them. Inevitably, this drags the individual down spiritually.
- The individual must firmly resist this downward slide. He/she must not succumb to the argument, "What is the use of my reforming when the Society as a whole is so rotten? If I spend my energy in reforming, it would get me nowhere; I would just get drowned; reformation is a losing proposition." Instead, he/she must confidently assert: "I don't care about win or lose, survival or extinction. I am wearing the dress of a human, and I must be true to the dress I don. That is my primary responsibility and duty."

If one follows the path towards God with firm and unshakable determination, then one can be sure that God will

confer His Grace to ensure success. Remember what Baba often says: You take ONE step towards Me and I shall take a HUNDRED steps towards you! Yes, that really is TRUE, as many have discovered by personal experience. What then are we waiting for?!

ADDITIONAL NOTES RELATING TO THE ABOVE

- The above discussion deals with an apparent paradox and resolves that paradox.
 - To get a feel for the concepts involved, consider a beam of white light that passes through a prism. We all know that the white beam would get split into different colours.
- OK but what is the point? The point is simply this. The Divine pervades the entire Universe. But our senses are like the prism; they compel us to see and experience differences.
- But what is wrong with that? After all, is it not God who gave us the senses? Why then complain if the senses are doing their job? True God gave us the senses, but what if we misuse them? That really is the point.
 - Any use of the senses that tends to keep us away from realising our Divine nature, and that delays our union with God is a misuse.
 - OK, the senses are used properly; then what? When one keeps the senses and the Mind under perfect control, then one would clearly perceive Unity in diversity. It would be like recombining the split beam with another prism working in the opposite direction.
 - The senses are like the first prism that splits. Sense control is like the second prism that unifies. A man BELOW the senses would see only diversity whereas a man ABOVE the senses would see only Oneness. Diversity and Unity are thus a matter of perspective.



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- Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity offers an example of how different perceptions can be when perspectives are different. This theory compares what two observers would actually see of the SAME events. One of these observers is stationary while the other is moving with a uniform velocity. It turns out that if the moving observer is going at a speed close to that of light, then two events that would appear distinctly spaced out in time can appear SIMULTANEOUS to the moving observer! Now who is correct? Relativity says that what the stationary observer sees is correct for him and likewise, what the moving observer sees is correct for him? We might wonder, "How can two contradictory things be correct at the same time? Impossible!" Is it? Just imagine a person in Puttaparthi making a phone call to someone in Chicago. It is 12 noon in Puttaparthi and therefore there is bright sunshine everywhere; but in Chicago, it is midnight and dark everywhere. Thus, the person in Puttaparthi and the person in Chicago have very different environments. In the same way, a person who is immersed in duality would perceive the world in one way while the person who sees only Oneness everywhere would see that very same world in an entirely different way.

- Swami Vivekananda talks about a saint named Parvi Baba who lived some two hundred years ago on the banks of the river Ganges. He lived in a cave full of cobras! He never thought of them as deadly snakes but embodiments of Divinity! We would all imagine that this saint was a nut but for him we worldly mortals were the mad people. As Ramakrishna Paramahansa often used to say, "Everyone in the world is mad. Some are mad after money, power and the like while a few are mad about God; that is all!"

- A new question arises: "OK, for a person immersed in duality, how do you explain the presence of the 'bad' in the world?" The following analogy may help. God created grapes. When grapes are crushed, we get grape juice. Grape juice is a refreshing drink. There is nothing wrong with it. However, this very same juice can ferment whereupon it can be harmful. The message is that bad emerges when there is a perversion of the good. In other words, to start with there is nothing that is bad. But if perversion enters the picture then good can become bad.

- Bhagavan Baba sometimes illustrates this adulteration by considering the example of Love itself. Love as God has installed it in us is pure and unsullied. It is totally Divine. But when this Love enters the world, it runs the danger of getting degraded, if one is not careful. It is rather like the grape juice getting fermented if one is not careful.

- OK, what are the forms this "degraded Love" assumes? Well, it can manifest as attachment, desire and so on.

- Why does such degradation occur? It occurs on account

of body-consciousness. A person who is not totally selfless, wants various kinds of advantages for his "body". For example, a mother may love her son immensely and also make all kinds of sacrifices. But she may also have various expectations. She may want her son to become great so that she shines in reflected glory and feel proud. Or else she may expect her son to take care of her in her old age. This is an example of "tainted" love. Swami's Love, on the other hand, is an example of Pure Love, without any trace of any selfishness whatsoever.

- OK, agreed that everything starts off as good, and if there is perversion or contamination, then the even the good can become bad. So, in this dual world, how is one to conduct oneself? That is simple! Avoid, a) seeing what is bad, b) avoid hearing what is bad, c) avoid speaking what is bad. All this is readily achieved by avoiding bad company and seeking good company.

- Granted, but we are told we must seek Oneness. But on the other hand, all this advice is strongly emphasising duality. Will it not trap one in the dual world?

- Not really. Once a person starts being good and stays with it, the vision of that person would gradually grow. And one fine day, the vision of that person would become so wide that his whole perspective would be different; he would now begin to see good even in what "appears" to be evil. It is like fire burning and purifying everything.

- May be, but all that is going to take a very long time. Meanwhile, how to get along in a dual world, shunning the bad, and yet trying to believe that even the bad is really good in disguise? Is that not double-talk?

- To one steeped in the dual world, indeed this might sound like double-talk. But it really is not so. For example, long ago when people were told that the earth was spherical, they did not believe it. They said, if it were so, people on the other side would fall down or fall off the earth! But we know that they do not. Clearly, these mis-guided people lacked that piece of knowledge, which explains why people do not fall off. In the same way, in spirituality too, one must get rid of one's ignorance before the non-dual aspect becomes truly meaningful.

- OK, one accepts the non-dual view but how to live and function in the world wherein 99.9999 percent of the people are immersed in duality? This is where the idea of the Cosmic Drama comes into the picture! The concept would be discussed later.

- Basically, one must go through life constantly reminding oneself that it is all a Drama, scripted by the Lord, and in

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which the Lord Himself plays all roles in disguise.

- Many years ago, in Divine Discourse, Baba after narrating the well-known story of Prince Prahalada and his demonic father Hiranyakashipu, Swami stunned the audience by declaring, "*Hiranyakashipu nene*," meaning that Hiranyakashipu also was none other than Him!

- But why did God have come disguised as Hiranyakashipu? Well, there could be many answers to that. One is that God came as Prahalada's examiner, donning the role of the wicked father Hiranyakashipu. Another is to tell the people of the world how to set priorities in this dual world, always giving primacy to God; in other words, how to act properly in the Cosmic Drama!

- To sum up, although in reality there is nothing bad in Creation, from a practical point of view, that is, from the point of view of most of us who are immersed in duality, it is better to consciously avoid what is supposed to be bad. It is like an aircraft taking off from an airstrip that is surrounded by hills. As should be obvious, unless the pilot carefully avoids the hills, there would be disaster; it is the same in life; one must negotiate past obstacles and the so-called bad form the greatest obstacles.

POINTS TO PONDER ABOUT

- It was mentioned that the picture that the world presents depends on one's outlook. If it is positive, then one would see nothing but good. If it is negative, one would see nothing but bad. [Remember the saying that a glass filled 50 % with water appears half-full to some and half-empty to others?] In general, all of us are a mixture of some positive traits and some negative traits. Thus our outlook is not quite perfect and therefore flawed. Swami has described this in terms of looking through coloured glasses. Look up those quotes. He also describes this in terms of putting clean water in bottles with various colours. That also would be a useful quote to offer during discussions.

- Many would not agree that there is no bad in the world. These are the people who believe in absolutes. How would you try to convince them that everything depends on outlook? This is largely a matter of anticipating the objections and being ready with the reply. Such a mental exercise would help in getting rid of one's own doubts.

- It is also important to consider how one would motivate young people to avoid seeing bad and be good. In some respects, the young of today are better sensitised than those of an earlier generation with regard to green issues. For example, most children who have been exposed to issues relating to the environment would readily oppose the slaughter of whales,

the wanton destruction of forests and so on. But how to motivate the young to be good in matters relating to sensual pleasures of various kinds, where the media is playing havoc? This important issue needs careful thought. The strategies evolved could be used in EHV classes and the like.

- It was mentioned earlier that in the quest for Purity, one need not feel that total Purity is impossible, and that therefore one need not waste time seeking the impossible. It is like this. God wants to see if we are determined to seek Purity. If we are bent upon Purity, that is enough for Him. He will then stretch our His hand and redeem us.

- One can understand this concept with the help of what is called a logarithmic scale. Using powers of ten, one can write numbers as follows: $0.001 = 10^{-3}$. $0.01 = 10^{-2}$. $0.1 = 10^{-1}$. $1 = 10^0$. $10 = 10^1$. $100 = 10^2$. $1000 = 10^3$. And so on. Thus, one can make a scale like below:

0.001	0.01	0.1	1.0	10	100	1000	10000	100000	1000000
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This is the logarithmic scale. In this scale, there is no zero and no infinity. Thus, on a logarithmic scale, one cannot be totally Pure or totally impure. All of us are somewhere or the other on this scale. Thus, in principle we can never attain perfect Purity! And yet, people get redemption. How? That is because, God lifts us out! He will do so when He is convinced that we deserve redemption. Thus we need not be scared that we cannot attain perfect Purity. What is needed is the determination to become as Pure as possible.



A little boy was told by the doctor that he could save his sister's life by giving her some blood. The six-year-old girl was near death, a victim of a disease from which the boy had made a **marvelous** recovery two years earlier. Her only chance for restoration was a blood transfusion from someone who had previously conquered the illness. Since the two children had the same rare blood type, the boy was the ideal donor.

"Johnny, would you like to give your blood for Mary?" the doctor asked. The boy hesitated. His lower lip started to tremble. Then he smiled, and said, *"Sure, Doc. I'll give my blood for my sister."* Soon the two children were wheeled into the operating room Mary, pale and thin; Johnny, robust and the picture of health. Neither spoke, but when their eyes met, Johnny grinned. As his blood siphoned

into Mary's veins, one could almost see new life come into her tired body.

The ordeal was almost over when Johnny's brave little voice broke the silence, *"Say Doc, when do I die?"* It was only then that the doctor realized what the moment of hesitation, the trembling of the lip, had meant earlier. Little Johnny actually thought that in giving his blood to his sister he was giving up his life! And in that brief moment, the **final** decision that he had made was the greatest love of all... the unconditional sacrificing love... Sacrificing PART of what you have is human nature, but sacrificing all of what you have needs a lot of LOVE. Nowadays people always think of what they can get in return before giving, if the return is less than their **givings**, then they will be reluctant to give.

“The Guess came True!”



“Where had You been, Swami?”, we asked Him, when He sat up and leaned back, on the wall. He answered, with a smile, as if He was not at all tired or exhausted after the twenty-minute-absence from the body. “Oh! I had been to Dehra Dun!”

We were astonished! We asked Him what was the urgency for the visit, what was the calamity which had to be averted, who was the Bhaktha involved etc. He said that it was not a 'calamity' this time, but it was a dying person to whom He had to give His Darsan, at the time of death. “That was why you saw Vibhuthi issue from My mouth. When I give Darsan to a dying person, that happens. Remember this”.

We searched our memories for the name and address of the Dehra Dun devotee but, we could not recall any one's name. Then Baba Himself volunteered the information. He said, “Don't you remember Dr. Krishna, the Lady Medical Officer from Vellore, who comes here often? It was her mother who passed away ten minutes ago, at Dehra Dun”. And, He was speaking to three of us, in His room at the Prashanthi Nilayam at Puttaparthi, on 15th November 1958, at 5-40 P.M.!

At 5-20 P.M. that day, while Baba was reading out a letter He suddenly shouted, “Ha!”, as if He was answering some one calling Him from afar and fell on the floor, as if He had thrown His body and left it in a trice, on journey! There were two more in the room, besides myself and, we watched over Him helplessly, praying to Him, for what could we do other than

that? At 5-30 P.M, Baba coughed thrice and there gushed from His mouth the sacred Vibhuthi. We wondered what could it mean. Ten minutes later, He came back and sat up. It was then that we ventured to ask Him, “Where had You been Swami?”

We knew Dr. Krishna and had seen her at Puttaparthi and at Delhi, when Baba visited the home of the Doctor. When Baba was at Rishikesh, the mother had come down to the place and she had even the unique satisfaction of worshipping Baba. And, so we were glad that the mother was privileged to have the Darsan of the Lord, during her last moments.

Baba told us, in answer to our questions, that Dr. Krishna was at her beside at Dehra Dun, that she was actually there at the time, holding the pulse and that it was quiet and a happy death. He said that all the nearest and dearest were around the bed. “She was a very pious lady and she got the death she deserved”, He said. “They are doing Bhajana in that room! The atmosphere is so pure and holy”, He announced. Surely, we thought, that was why Baba blessed the soul.

We were all indeed lucky that we could witness this Manifestation of the Divine Mystery, for as Baba has often said, “Only the Lord can discern the exact moment of the liberation of a soul”.

The 15th of November was a Saturday. On Tuesday, the 18th, the post brought an Inland Letter from Dehra Dun, which Baba gave me to read and when it was opened, lo, it was from Dr. Krishna herself! She had posted it on Sunday, with extra stamps and it had to come fast and flying to Baba's Hands.

“My mother drew her last breath”, it said, “at 5-30 P.M. yesterday”. Dr.Krishna had also written that they were doing Bhajan in the room for some time and that her mother was praying to Baba during her last moments. She concluded her letter thus, “I guess she had Your Darsan.”

She guessed hundreds of miles away! And we were told by Baba at Prasanthi Nilayam that her guess had come true!

Kasturi.

"Is this for Me??"

"When I am with a child, I am a child. . ." How delightfully true! In 1978 a large group of children from a center in England visited Brindavan, taking with them seven sacks of 'presents' for Swami (to be given to the needy.) And what a collection it was! Apart from all the garments, the children had given the things they liked best - teddy bears, toy trains, cars, toys, even clothes-pegs, and a packet of Weetabix breakfast cereal!

And is this for me, too? Swami kept saying in wonder, as he took out, examined, and played with each item to the children's delight.

Then he took them to see His little animal friends in the Brindavan garden, sitting a small rabbit on his crown of hair for their amusement; and then on to fondle the calves, for at that time the Gokulam was situated behind the former residence. (Meantime several important personages who had come to see Him were forced to curb their impatience!)

The first night the children were far too excited to sleep, so Baba visited their quarters and asked them if they would go to sleep if He went to sleep? There was a chorus of assent. So the Avatar lay down on the floor, pretending to sleep, till all were in blissful slumber, when He was able to creep out on tiptoe.



Quiz

Ten Questions to test your Spiritual Quotient

1. In the sacred epic Ramayana, Lord Rama had three brothers. One of them was Lakshmana, Who were the other two?
2. On which date in 1940, did Sai Baba leave His brother's home saying, He no longer belongs to the family, He has come for the whole humanity and for the first time declared that He is Sai Baba?
3. Before the Mahabharata war actually started, Lord Krishna and Arjuna had a conversation on the battle field which for centuries has remained a timeless treasure trove of knowledge and wisdom. What is this dialogue called?
4. What are the two other lines in the oft-quoted saying of Baba which starts with 'Follow the master' and ends with 'Finish the game'?
5. Baba has revealed that the current incarnation of Him as 'Sathya Sai Baba' is the second of the three incarnations He has decided for the current Kali age. What is the name of the first incarnation that ended in 1918? And what will be the future incarnation that has been revealed by Baba?
6. The Trinity, according to the Christian faith, consists of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. What, according to Hindu belief, is the Trinity?
7. What's the title of the life-story of Baba written in series of volumes by Baba's biographer, late Sri N. Kasturi?
8. Baba often emphasizes on practicing five human values. Sathya (Truth) and Dharma (Righteousness) are two of them. What are the other three?
9. There is only one language, Baba often says. What is this universal language?
10. What is the name of the religion founded by Baba?

Christmas 2003.....



Christmas is always a well-loved and eagerly anticipated festival in Prashanti Nilayam. From early December the ashram gets transformed with

devotees converging from various parts of the world. They come, eager to participate, sing Christmas carols and bask in His Divine presence. The sight of the multi coloured scarves, the myriad babel of tongues, blending together in one harmonious note is a fitting testimony of the catholicity of Swami's teachings and a tribute to His *akarshana shakthi* or Divine magnetic power that compellingly draws people to Him from all corners of the globe, through the endearing appeal of His all encompassing Love.

Christmas 2003 too was no different! The festivities were set rolling on the afternoon of the 24th of December, but in reality had started much earlier. For 2 weeks prior, 75 men and women from many countries had been working hard and long, painting angels, decorating Christmas trees and so on, and putting up the decorations incrementally in Sai Kulwant Hall. This set the tone and the Christmas spirit was generated in the hearts of all devotees, no matter what their cultural and religious back-ground. Outstanding nativity scenes were also installed on both sides of the steps of the verandah of Sai Kulwant Hall, one depicting Mary and Joseph and the other showing the three wise men.

The afternoon of the 24th of December, the Christmas Eve program was the singing of Christmas carols by all our overseas brothers and sisters. This program involved about 400 ladies and 250 men in the adult choir, and about 100 children in the children's' choir, well assisted by 75 people serving as Seva Dals. All these people were from 25 countries around the world.



After Swami entered Sai Kulwant Hall, He slowly walked up to the front of the verandah, looking and appreciating all the decorations. Walking up to the nativity scene of Mary and Joseph,

He asked, "Where is baby Jesus?" Swami also lit the Christmas candles to signify the start of the celebrations.

As if in answer to Swami's question, the program started with a short skit with children dressed as inn-keepers; Mary and Joseph went around knocking on numerous doors and being told repeatedly, "There is no room in the inn"..... This story was brought out in song by the children, and culminated with Baby Jesus being brought forward in a crib by both Mary and Joseph and placed at Sai's Lotus Feet! The children then sang for Swami for about 25 minutes.



This was followed by the adult choir that entertained with songs of praise and worship to Swami for about 45 minutes. The songs were well rendered, with full feeling and straight from the heart. After *arathi*, *prasadam* was distributed to all.



The evening saw a special Christmas dinner being served to all devotees in the Western canteen.

Christmas morning saw all the overseas devotees seated in Sai Kulwant Hall bright and early. Several thousand devotees present in Sai Kulwant Hall sang Christmas carols in one voice, for the Christmas morning *Nagarsankirtan*.

After the carols had set the tone, all the devotees eagerly awaited Swami's arrival. Swami arrived into Sai Kulwant Hall in the Red Maruti car to the sound of Vedic chants by the students of the Institute. After getting down from the



Christmas 2003.....

car, He walked to the right side of the verandah and watched the primary school kids dressed in bright red sweaters and caps, perform a violin concert for Him. One could see that He was visibly moved and happy at their *bhakti* and hard work in their endeavour to please Him.

Still standing, He signaled to the Band leader of the Institute Brass band. The band then played their hearts out for their beloved Swami.



Swami then walked and sat down in His chair. And it was time for a little interlude. Santa came bounding in, and went up to Swami. After being blessed by Swami, the primary school boy dressed as Santa went around all the seated devotees and threw chocolates and candies to them.

The morning came to a close with the singing of carols by the students of the Institute. While *prasadam* was being distributed, Swami graciously cut the cakes that the Institute boys had prepared for Him.

Christmas afternoon saw speeches by the overseas devotees - Mrs. Rita Bruce, and Mr. Arthur Hillcoat. Swami then surprised three devotees by asking them to speak - one was a Institute student, Mr. Mahalingam. Swami also asked Mr Narendra Reddy and Dr. Michael Goldstein, both from the US, to speak. After this Dr. G. Venkataraman also addressed the gathering. Finally, Swami gave His Christmas message. He repeated and stressed that the same Divinity is latent in all beings in the form of "I". The breath signifies this as "*So Hum*" or "I am that". He also spoke of the incident when Jesus, as a child, gets lost in Jerusalem, only to be found inside the temple. Swami gave an excellent interpretation of this incident saying that one has to search "inside" to find Divinity. (Full text of Discourse available at <http://www.srisathyasai.org.in/>)



Thus the Christmas festivities came to a close. There might still not be PEACE ON EARTH yet in these troubled times, but everyone in Prashanti Nilayam experienced a profound peace in their hearts, that only the Lord can give.

Welcoming the New Year.....

January 1st New Year day dawned bright and early for the eager devotees waiting in Sai Kulwant Hall, to ring in the New Year in the Presence of the Lord.

After Swami entered the Sai Kulwant Hall, He stood and listened to the Institute Brass Band regale Him with rousing tunes. Visibly moved, He got down the steps of the verandah and walked closer to the band. He stood close to them and listened through their program. On completion He expressed His pleasure by posing for group photographs with the members of the band.

Swami then walked back and sat down in His chair. This was a signal for the Institute Boys to sing carols to Him. After the carol singing was over, Swami went to the back of the verandah and cut the cakes prepared by the Institute boys.

Then, to the pleasant surprise of everyone, He walked back out onto the verandah and blessed the crowd again, before taking *arathi* and leaving for the Poornachandra auditorium.

The New Year evening saw a gathering of the alumni of the Sri Sathya Sai Institutions at the Sai Kulwant Hall. Feeling the thrill of homecoming, they decided to express their joy

in song, and give a concert for the enjoyment of the Lord. A student writes of his memorable experience that day.....



Another year was ready to pass by in Parthi, making some happier, some wiser, and some older. But in the last 2 days of the year gone by, time seemed to slow in its tracks, and glance at this beautiful Abode of the Divine, aglow with the perennial grace of our beloved Sai.



Welcoming the New Year.....

The former students of the Sai Institutions felt the familiar thrill of a homecoming, as we eagerly arrived in Parthi, elated, and eager to have a glimpse of Swami.

A bird that desires to soar the skies of enduring freedom from everything, does so from the most majestic tree, from which it draws its own nourishment. With a gentle push from the breeze of its swaying leaves, and the firm support of its strong branches, the tree sets the bird towards greater heights. We are the birds....and our support and strength : Mother Sai.

The last day of the year was a truly memorable one. On December 31st, 2003, We, the alumni of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, as part of our ongoing seva activities, distributed clothing to 124 boys and 135 girls, from the Government Hostel, in Puttaparthi and a nearby village. Swami in His infinite Grace and Mercy, handed over the clothing to the children. We felt gratified by Swami's love for us, and we were further delighted when He let us lead the bhajans in the morning. This seemed to be an assurance of the blessing to come.

The first day of January. D-day. We welcomed a beautiful day with our hearts full, and beating to an expectant rhythm. As we all sat drinking in the Divinity before us, He beckoned us to sit on the beautifully decorated stage, ... beside Him.

All of us were too thrilled to speak, so we chose to sing instead ! A carefully rehearsed rendering of songs was underway. With Swami the Lord, the inspiration beside us, every song was simply the opening of every heart.

With our brother V. Kumar at the outset, there couldn't have been a better beginning. The song conveyed the essence of what any child of Sai Maa would sing to his mother. V.Kumar sang "Kahin Tum Badal Na Jaana". Beginning with mischief the indulgent mother would lovingly excuse, the song happily flowed, praising the Lord.

Paradise is at the feet of Bhagawan. Give yourself to Him, for He has already embraced you. Kota Sivakumar sang "Nee charanamalu ..."

Just as Lord Krishna lead Arjuna through his dharma as a charioteer, so is Sai Krishna leading us all on the path of righteousness, as our Sarathi. "Sarathi Tu Baba" was soulful rendering by twins :Vikram and Anand, with masterpieces as interludes from Balasubramaniam on the violin, Muthu and Saunil Narang on the tabla.



Bhakti is "Attachment to the Unknown". The highest emotion. It was tangible as Hariharan sang "Chilanga katti", beckoning a little Krishna to dance his way into our hearts. Shrivastava and Ramesh struck the right chords with their guitars, and Rajagopal enthralled us all on the tabla.

Just as a river flows through wonderful paths, leaving beauty on its trail, so did this rendering. Santosh Pai made ripples with "Prabal Prem ke", quoting instances in song when the Lord chose to protect the reputation of His bhaktas rather than His own.

Prasanna Venkatesh provided solid support with fluid movements on the tabla.

Sudhakar Parth assured the dejected hearts of many a devotee with his song "Ramji Kareng Beda Paar" After all, with Him beside, above and within us, what need we fear?

Subbarao and Jaydev formed a fitting conclusion, full of melody. The very dust on His feet are worth all the riches in the world, said Subbarao in "Padamle chalu".

Thamasoma Jyotirgamaya, in the Lord's Abode, there is only effulgence, no darkness. Jaydev sang "Bhagavan keghar Dher hai".

All the students ended the music program with a group song to our Sai Maa.

To the delight of everyone of us present there, Swami then gave His new year message. He said that every moment should be considered holy and new. He emphasised that there is no greater sadhana than service. It is better to serve the fellow human being you see than to worship a God whom you cannot see. He also advised us students not hanker after money and directed us to cultivate Tyaga, sacrifice. (Full text of Discourse available at <http://www.srisathyasai.org.in/>)

And so concluded the evening, which was nothing short of an unparalleled expression of Swami's Love for us children, the Sri Sathya Sai Students.

Service by Sai Students



Nestled on the outskirts of Mudigubba, 36 kms. from Prasanthi Nilayam, exists a small hamlet called Maarala, that was designed to be venue of the 24th Grama Seva Camp conducted by the Sri Sathya Students, held on the 30th of December 2003.

Preliminary visits by our brothers revealed that, as is typical of the Indian landscape, especially in these confines, Maarala comprised mostly of agriculturists and cattle raisers.

In keeping with Bhagavan's directives over the past seven years, prior arrangements were made to address the health and well being of the inhabitants and their surroundings, with a fervent prayer to Swami that these efforts facilitate an eventual improvement in their lifestyle. Accordingly, a total of 41 doctors and several paramedics from Vishakapatnam, Coorg, Coimbatore, Bangalore, Hyderabad and a group from overseas as well participated in the camp.

The specialities that were covered in by this team included:



ENT
Cardiology
General Medicine
Dermatology
Ophthalmology
Gynecology
Dentistry
Homeopathy
Acupressure
Veterinary

After a prayer and bhajans, the various departments were set up and the doctors and paramedics. In addition to medicine and food, hope, too was distributed, and in abundance.

The different departments were set up in the classrooms of the village school and the elderly, the householders and the children were diagnosed at the different departments.

Simultaneously, the tables for the registering of the patients



Service by Sai Students



commenced and continued till late afternoon reaching a total of 2455 patients.

Each person was directed or taken to the respective department depending on the complaint / ailment. While the paramedics assisted the doctors, the students ensured that everything proceeded smoothly and efficiently. Once the diagnosis was done, the patients were directed to the pharmacy where the prescribed medicines were given along with instructions in their local language (Telugu) on dosage and requirements.

The faces of the villagers beamed with hope and satisfaction, that there was someone who cared deeply for them. After the villagers received their medicines, food was distributed in a shamiana.

A Bal Vikas class was conducted on the school playground for the school children and others from the village bhajans, shlokas, etc.

A shaminana was replete with posters on Health and Hygiene



and several students gave general healthcare instructions to the villagers.

Here too Chunam and Spatikam was distributed to the villagers for de-fluoridation of drinking water explaining the process to them.

Sai protein was distributed to the children and 300 saplings were planted in the village.

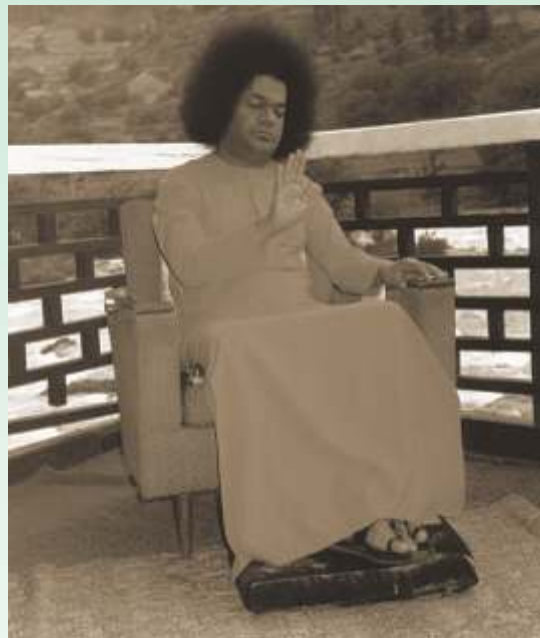
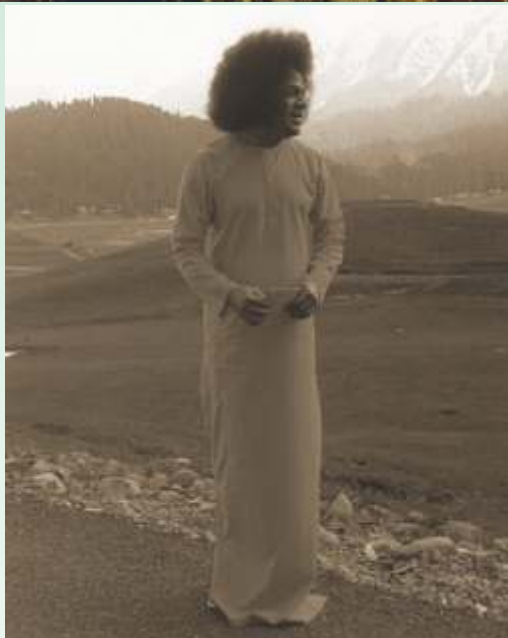
Blankets, sarees, and dhotis were given to the elderly persons of the village.

In keeping with the common practice of Swami to bring relief in various forms directly to the doorstep of the beneficiary, these camps are held quarterly totally free of charge in the various villages around Puttaparthi and Bangalore.

The objective was clearly in line with Swami's message: bring spirituality to the poor in the form of food, medicine and shelter.



" With Swami to Kashmir, 1980"



Upto 31th Decemeber 2003

BANGALORE SUPERSPECIALITY HOSPITAL

Cardiac Surgeries:	4015
Cardiac Catheterisation:	6798 [3635-Diagnostic; 3163-Interventional]
Neuro Surgeries:	3322
CT Scans:	11995
MRI Exams:	12872

PUTTAPARTHI SUPERSPECIALITY HOSPITAL

Heart surgeries	13616
Cath procedures	13692
Urology surgeries	22049
Ophthalmology surgeries	22338
CT scans	

IN THE NEXT ISSUE.....

Hope you have enjoyed reading this edition's cover story on SSSIHMS, Bangalore. This sacred Temple of Healing was the venue of a great declaration by Swami on 19th January, 2002... There, quite unexpectedly, Swami unveiled His plan of supplying the water starved metropolis of Chennai with pure, drinking water....yet another proof of His compassion for mankind....and today, in His own silent way, Swami fulfilled His word....Chennai's cup of joy is about to overflow! Don't miss the story on.....

THE CHENNAI WATER SUPPLY PROJECT

Answers for the Quiz.

1. Bharata and Satrugna. Lord Rama was the eldest followed by Bharata, Lakshmana and Satrugna were twins.
2. 20th of October, 1940.
3. The Bhagawad Geeta
4. Face the devil, Fight to the end
5. Shirdi Sai Baba, Prema Sai Baba.
6. Brahma, the creator; Vishnu, the preserver; Shiva, the destroyer.
7. Sathyam Sivam Sundaram (meaning - Truth, Auspiciousness and Beauty). There are four volumes in this series.
8. Santhi (peace), Prema (love), Ahimsa (Non-violence).
9. The language of the Heart.
10. It's a Googly. Baba has not and will never start any new religion. For, He says, His task is to make a Hindu, a better Hindu; a Christian, a better Christian and a Muslim, a better Muslim. He has come not to add one more religion but to unite all religions into one.



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