

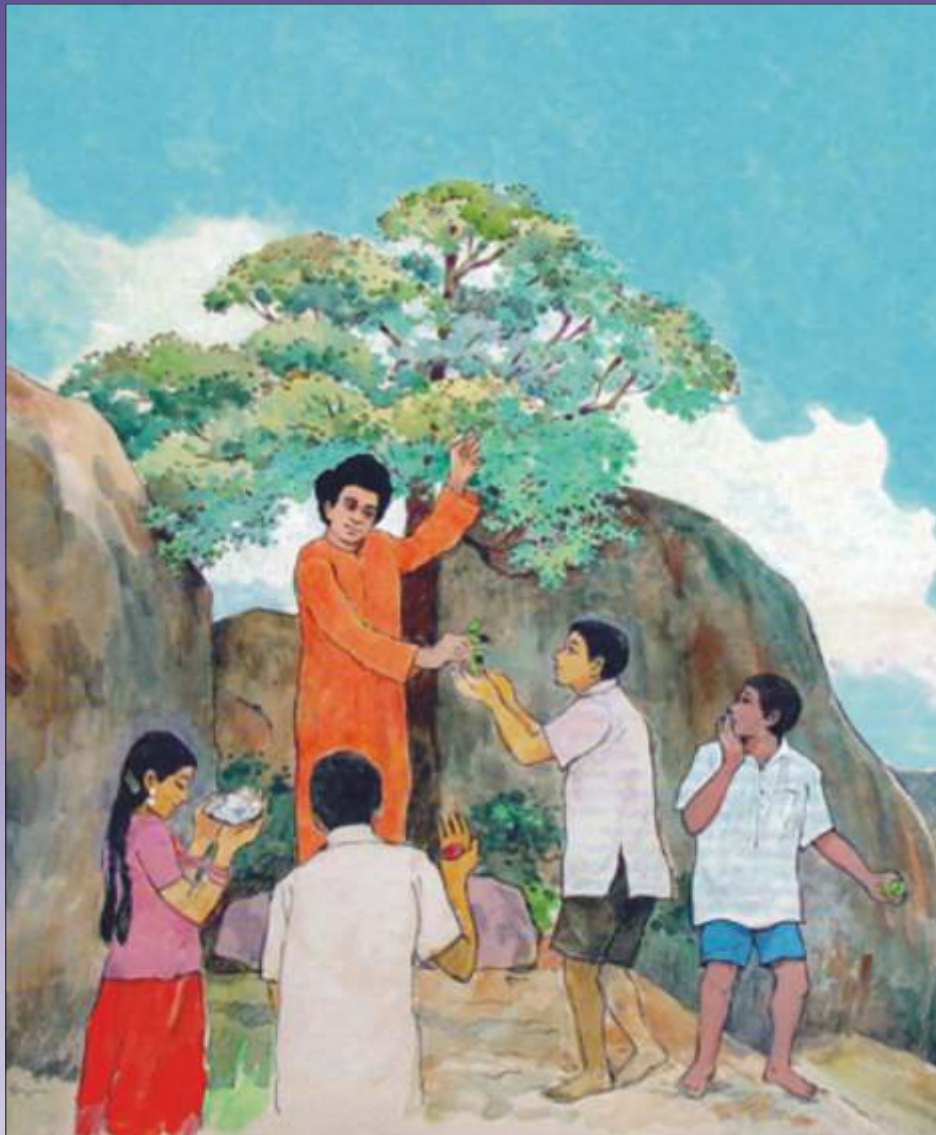


HEART TO hEART



RADIO SAI LISTENERS' JOURNAL

Sai Leela



COVER STORY

The Divine Sport of Lord Sai

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PRANAMS AT THE LOTUS FEET

Journal

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S N Informatics Private Limited, Bangalore



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

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Between You And Us

Dear Reader,

Sai Ram and greetings from Prashanti Nilayam. This issue will appear on 1st April, commonly referred to as All Fools Day. Many are the pranks performed on this day, by the clever on the gullible and the simple. But do we realise that as opposed to this once a year affair, we are in fact being taken for a ride every single day on many fronts? Indeed, often we are busy deluding ourselves, without needing anyone to fool us.

A few years ago, a fairly well-to-do devotee from the West had to suddenly come here there were “instructions”. So he came, did what he was told to and of course received a lot of Grace. The devotee was naturally very happy about it all but the delusion virus was very much there in him. How else is one to explain a remark he made to a person here? The devotee said, “You have no idea of how many plans I had carefully made before coming here. I was planning to take a vacation, long overdue. I had made all the hotel bookings and the travel plans. This is summer and bookings are very difficult. These have to be made months in advance. Besides, I had got tickets for many shows. These tickets are very difficult to get and have to be purchased six months in advance. I had to cancel all that in order to dash here”. One no doubt sympathises with the devotee for having to sacrifice all that he had to and see his plans being overturned. But does he realise that in place of the pleasure that he was paying for to get in the shows, Bhagavan was here showering him with incomparable Divine Bliss?

One cannot find fault with the devotee. The entire ambience of today is like that. We are constantly inviting delusion and the Media is ready to supply it to us 24 hours a day, in a variety of forms. Apparently, they now have shows called Reality Shows! One wonders what that means! Be that as it may, we here in Radio Sai feel blessed that we do not have to struggle to get advertisements, worry about penetrations, bend backwards to “balance” [meaning present both good and evil, more of the latter of course], and so on.

We have a simple agenda to spread His Message. And we are quite happy to focus entirely on that. Why? The answer is simple. Just look what the Lord says in the 18th Chapter of the *Gita*. He says:

He who with supreme devotion to Me spreads this gospel [His Message] amongst My devotees shall doubtless come to Me.

There is none amongst men rendering service who is dearer to Me than he; nor is there on earth more beloved by Me than he.

[18. 68, 69]

So why don't you join us in this exciting adventure that is also a service? Want to know how to do it? First write to us your suggestions, and then we can take it further.

All the best. Jai Sai Ram.

SGH TEAM

Sai Leela



Setting out for the Chitravathi

The word *Leela* is frequently translated as “sport” or “play”, but such renderings obscure the fact that the term *Leela* is exclusively reserved for descriptions related to the Lord.

It is often said that Creation itself is a *Leela* of God, and indeed it is. But it was only when the Blessed Lord descended as Bhagavan Sri Krishna that mankind got a glimpse of the wonderful texture associated with God's *Leelas*. The childhood and the boyhood of Krishna are full of stories of games and mischief. Children, being close to God, are always happy, ever full of play and pranks. What then was so unique about Krishna's sport? What is it about them that brings tears to the eyes of poets when they sing about them and indescribable happiness to listeners when they hear about them? It is the Blissful Divine touch that makes all the difference. That really is

the essential quality of *Leelas* - they relate to the Divine, and they give Bliss.

Children are constantly admonished not to steal, and are punished if they do. Yet, the very same parents who give such stern advice do not hesitate to narrate, and with much joy and relish too, stories about how Krishna used to 'steal' butter along with His friends. Is this not an exercise in contradiction? No, because when the Lord steals, it really is not stealing but something else with a deeper meaning and significance.

There are no stories of *Leelas* associated with the Rama Avatar. Perhaps, that was the Divine intention. Rama never formally revealed His Divinity, and may be that was why He did not quite leave His signature via *Leelas* [He did it in other ways though]. But the Krishna Avatar was different. However, the

Leelas of Krishna appear to have come more or less to an end with His departure from Brindavan to Mathura. Thereafter, mankind had to content itself with just the stories of the *Leelas*, till the advent of the Sathya Sai Avatar.

Krishna does not appear to have commented much upon *Leelas*, except to say that hearing about them or reading about them would fill devotees with immense joy. Swami, on the other hand, has commented on the role of *Leelas* in the current Avatar, that they would dominate only the first phase.

Leelas involve a dizzying mixture of fun, frolic, pranks, and spectacular miracles. They provide an opportunity for extra-ordinary intimacy between man and God, and therefore an occasion to forget the Avatar as God and regard Him instead as a most Dear Friend. *Leelas*

Sai Leela

do not involve rituals and ceremonies but games, picnics, fun, of course miracles galore, and various gifts too, all with a spiritual undercurrent. Together, the *Leelas* always evoke so much Love for God in the heart of devotees that unknown to them they earn great merit or *Punyam*. The opportunity to witness *Leelas* is itself the result of extra-ordinary merits acquired in previous births.

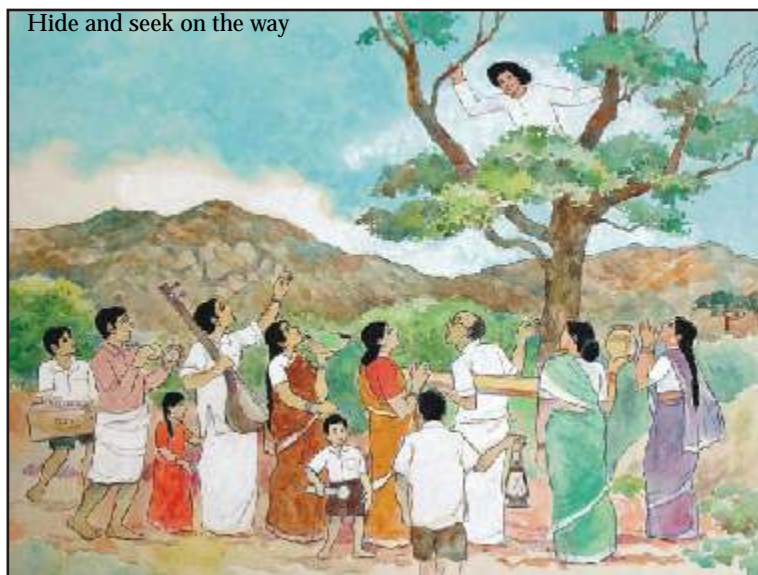
Why does God perform *Leelas*? This is difficult to understand, except in terms of Pure Love. A mother plays with her young three-month old baby. The mother is highly educated and very intelligent; yet, while fondling her child, she makes funny faces and noises, just to make the baby laugh. What is it that makes the mother behave like this? Love for her child. It is the same with the Almighty Lord. The intimacy associated with the *Leelas* convey the message that God is not remote as man imagines Him to be but is easily approached with Pure Love. And the miracles associated with the *Leelas* remind us that God is infinitely powerful. He can, and is ever ready to do anything for us. He is eagerly waiting for our call; all He wants from is just LOVE!

Operationally, two phases can be seen in the *Leelas* of Swami those relating to the period before the declaration of the Sai Avatarhood, and those that came later. Not much is known about the *Leelas* of the earlier period but thanks to the moving accounts written by a few devotees, some glimpses of the second phase are available. The *Leelas* of the second phase are associated with the period 1940-1950, when Bhagavan was in residence in the now historic *Paatha Mandiram* [old

Mandir]. Privileged to live with Him were a fortunate few, who ate with the Lord, walked with Him, sang with Him, played with Him, and served Him all the time. And everyday, Sai would shower His Love in His own unique way by taking them all out to the Chitravathi sands for a memorable evening of *Leelas*. So it was for ten years, and when Swami moved to the present *Mandir* in 1950, the curtain came down rather abruptly. The *Leelas* have not altogether ceased they can still be witnessed occasionally, especially in Kodaikanal but by and large, all we now have are just thrilling stories. Presented in the pages that follow, are

accompaniment during singing, a big carpet to spread on the sand, odd vessels, and a few lanterns. As the group made its way, there would be an air of tremendous excitement because any moment, Young Sai may start His play. Each day was different, and there were innumerable variations to the theme. Here are a few samples, kindly recorded for posterity by Mrs. Vijayakumari [in her well-known book, *Anyadha Saranam Naasthi*].

As soon as Swami set out like the Moon surrounded by the stars, we would follow Him and walk behind Him like His shadow. Some would grasp His robe, some would hold His hand while others kept up a conversation. As we walked, Swami would suddenly disappear! We would then go in various directions in search of Him, looking in every tree, behind every bush and shrub, and even in snake pits! Becoming tired after prolonged searching, we would collapse and call out, "Swami!" He would then suddenly jump out of the bush next to us, crying, "Boo!". What a wonder! How was this possible? Had we not searched for Him thoroughly everywhere, looking under every stem and leaf? While we stared at Him wonder-struck, He would hurry us saying, "Come on, move, get going!" and run away. Sometimes, He would be on the topmost branch of the tallest tree, calling out to us! Even as we were wondering how on earth He managed to get up there, we would find Him standing by our side, laughing loudly. Randomly, He would pluck leaves from a tamarind tree or some other tree, and place them in our hands. To our utter amazement, these leaves would be transformed into guava or sugar candy! Or else, He would pick a stone from the road and throw it into the air; it would come down as sugar candy!! He could hardly keep quiet even for a minute. We used to feel so zestful in His presence.



illustrated accounts of some of the *Leelas* of those exciting early days. Hopefully, they will, at least in some measure, capture the thrill and ecstasy of those who were fortunate to be the direct witnesses.

The high-point of the daily routine during the *Paatha Mandiram* days was unquestionably the evening outing to the Chitravathi sands. It was the moment that all devotees eagerly looked forward to, and possibly also the Lord. As the Sun went down in the western sky, the group, thirty or so in number would set forth. They would go carrying various musical instruments needed for

Sai Leela

The term *Kalpavriksha* occurs in Indian mythology and its literal translation is: wish-fulfilling tree. On a small hillock adjoining the Chitravathi river there is a tamarind tree, which, by its association with Sai, has earned for itself this name and become truly legendary. Decades ago, in the glorious *Paatha Mandiram* era, this tree was often the scene of many a *Leela*. A few accounts now, revolving around this famous tree.

There was a huge boulder under the Kalpavriksha. About two hundred people could comfortably sit on that rock. Watching Bhagavan, I would recall the son of Yasoda [Yasoda Bala] Lord Madhava, who in days gone by, balanced the huge Govardhana mountain on the tip of His little finger to save the lives of cows and cowherds. Jumping up to pluck a handful of leaves from that Tamarind tree, Sai would give a leaf to each of us and ask us to keep our palms closed. When we opened them at His command, we would find all kinds of things, sugar candy in one hand, rosary in another and peppermint in the third. He would then ask us to close the palm again and when we opened them as commanded by Him, we would find only tamarind leaves! We would think: "What a pity, I should have eaten that candy!" We would then gaze at Him wonder-struck, thinking to ourselves: "How amazing! How could such a variety of things materialise simultaneously?" He would then clap His hands to rouse us from our stupefied state. Because this tree gave devotees whatever they wished for, it came to be known as Kalpavriksha.

During their walk to the river, Swami and His party of devotees often rested for a while on the rock adjacent to the *Kalpavriksha*, especially as it provided scope for fun and games. Later, the group would head towards the sands of the river. And it was on the sands that the *Leelas* reached their crescendo, as we now hear.

Mine is no mesmerism, miracle, or magic! Mine is genuine Divine Power. Small minds and limited intellects cannot comprehend them. They have no strength or stamina to grasp the magnificence and the majesty. God can do anything. He has all Power in the palm of His hand. My body, like all other bodies, is a temporary habitation; but My Power is Eternal, All-pervasive, and Ever-dominant.

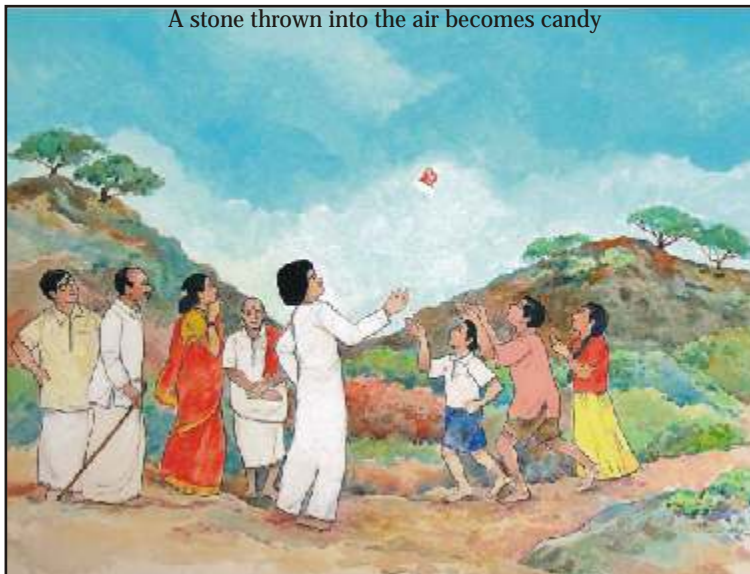
BABA

Coming down from this rock, we would assemble on the Chitravathi sands at a suitable spot selected by the devotees. After singing for some time and listening to Swami's Discourse on the pranks of Krishna, we would shout that we were hungry and pester Him to give us something to eat. Even as He moved His hands in the heap of piled-up sands, we would be able to predict what he would be pulling out. We could recognise the smell of Mysorepak [a type of sweet]. Ghee [clarified butter] would drip from it, and it would be hot. He would then place the pieces on a tray and serve us all with His own hands. How am I to describe that taste! After eating the sweet, we would say, "Swami, we are satiated with the sweet. Now give us some savouries." Our Beloved Swami, the embodiment of compassion would then pull vadas [a savoury dish] out of the sand. Its taste cannot be described even by Lord

Brahma. As He kept pulling vadas out of the sand, they were hot and dripping with ghee but surprisingly, not a speck of sand hung to them! How is that possible? Only questions and no answers! He would also extract from the sand pile, rosaries, idols, pendants, and books, and hand them over to those destined to receive them.

The articles that Swami created from the sand were unprecedented wonders, things that could not be procured anywhere. Nothing can stand comparison with those! The idols were made of panchloha [a combination of five alloys], or sandal wood, or ivory, or teak, or silver. He would materialise out of the sands, idols of Narayana, Radha, Krishna, Shirdi Sai, Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha, Shatrugana, Nataraja, etc. The rosaries materialised out of the sand would be made of pearl, coral, or crystal beads. He gave mother a statue of Vinayaka that He created out of the sand. We could not say whether it was made of clay or stone. Not too black, it had a slight reddish tinge. Wonder of wonders, the idol did not have a full-length trunk. When we asked Him why He gave mother an idol like that, He said, "Do Abhishekam [pouring an appropriate liquid] to the idol with milk, every Sunday. The trunk will then grow to the normal size." Exactly as He had forecast, later the trunk did grow! We simply cannot estimate the value of His gifts.

A stone thrown into the air becomes candy



It was not always a case of pulling objects and eatables out of the sand-pile on the Chitravathi river-bed. There were terrifying moments too, and follows below a description of one of them.

Once while we were resting on the Chitravathi sands, Swami said: "Look! Naga Sai is coming!" Thinking He was referring to a person, we turned to see who it was but saw no one.

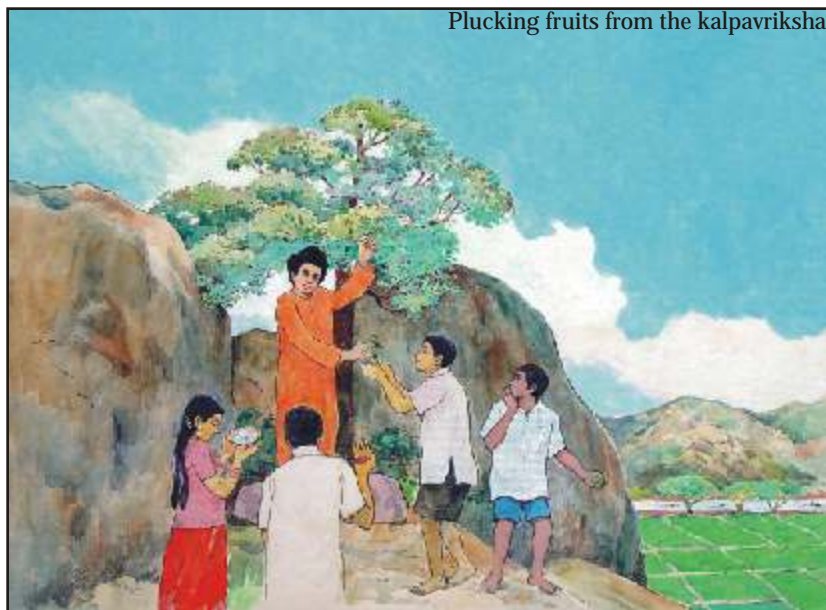
Sai Leela

Swami then said, "Look in that direction." We then saw a huge snake coming towards us. This was no ordinary snake! It looked verily like Adi Sessa, the Serpent on whom Lord Vishnu reclines. It was immense in size and we could not see its tail. As it came forward slithering and twisting sinuously as if dancing, it looked charming. As it advanced a little more, its head was suddenly transformed into the strikingly beautiful countenance of our Lord Sai. We had never heard of a miracle like that before! It was as if Swami was proclaiming that He was everywhere and in everything. Still, a snake is a snake and we began to tremble in fear as it came near to us. Looking at Swami, we implored, "No Swami, no! Please ask it to go away!" Swami looked gently at the snake and said, "Go now, Naga Sai." And it disappeared! That memorable night is etched in our minds.

On many occasions, Swami went far beyond just materialisation, to give a larger glimpse into the immensity of His Cosmic Powers. Mrs. Vijayakumari describes one such incident.

One day, when we were all walking towards the Chitravathi, Swami suddenly disappeared. Even as we were searching for Him, we heard the sound of a clap; looking up, we saw Swami alerting us, "I am on top of the hill!" It was six in the evening. The Sun had softened its beams and was sinking towards the west. The sky was filled with black clouds, as if it was wrapped in a dark blanket. Swami said, "Look at Me. I shall show you the Sun!" Even as we were wondering how the Sun that had already set come back again, we saw new rays rising behind Swami's head. The whole sky was now filled with blue clouds and the rays turned red! And redder and redder they became, till they looked fiery; they exuded so much heat that it made us all sweat

profusely. These rays were as hot as those from the scorching midday Sun. Unable to bear the heat, we loudly appealed, "Swami, it is too hot!" The heat then subsided. "Oh gosh!" we exclaimed, and were settling down, when Swami's voice again came down to us from the top of the hill, "I shall now show you the Moon." We saw behind Swami's head, the half-unfolded honey-coloured rays of the Moon. Soon they turned white, and became whiter and whiter still. We now began to shiver in the cold; our



bodies became stiff and our teeth began to chatter. "Swami! It is very cold!" And as we were imploring Him, the cold began to slowly subside.

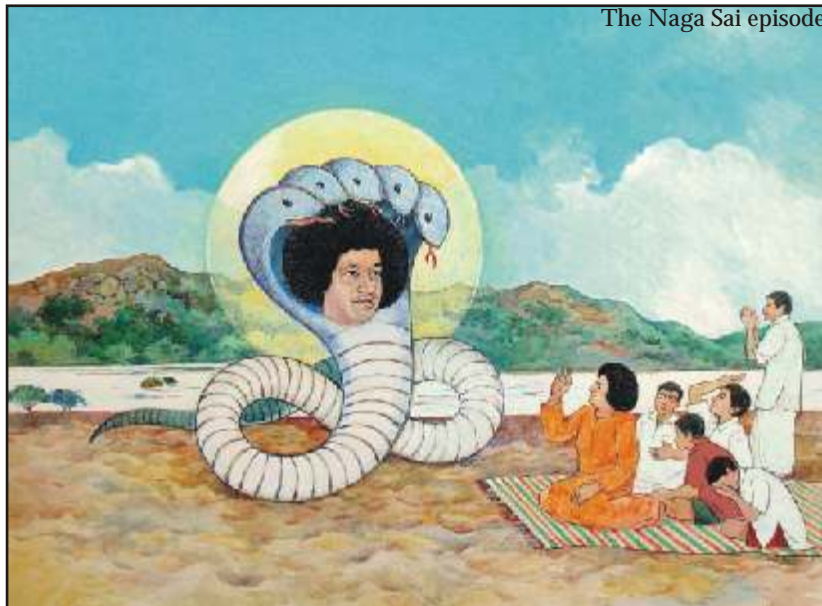
We now began to wonder what miracle He would perform next, when He announced: "I shall show you the Third Eye. Watch attentively." "Third Eye?! How does it look?" we wondered. Swami's body was not visible but His head appeared gigantic, as if stretched across the entire sky. Bewildered and stupefied, we stared at the sky. An orifice appeared on Swami's forehead between His two eyebrows; and fiery sparks issued from that opening. We were dazzled by the brilliance of those sparks. We were also scared. More than being afraid about ourselves, we were worried about what might happen to Swami. The sparks continued to gush out. Meanwhile, many had fallen down unconscious, and we did not know why these people had fainted. That made us even more

scared. Feeling lost and not knowing what to do, we began to cry. Suddenly, Swami was in our midst. "What happened?" He asked, patting us gently on the shoulder. "Why are you crying? Why have all these people fainted?" Not knowing what answers to give, we just hugged Him and continued to weep! As a few of those who had fainted recovered and got up, we mustered a little strength and asked Him, "Swami, are You alright? How come we did not see You there?" Even as we asked all these questions, we patted His face to assure ourselves that He was really with us. Swami laughed heartily and assured us that He was indeed alright. With a wave of His hand He materialised vibhuti and applied it on our foreheads. One by one, those who had fainted began to revive. It was a strange experience. We felt as if we were floating on air. It was a peculiar state of mind. We all went back to the Mandir and sat down for Bhajans. But we could not sing properly because we all felt dizzy. We were in

that state that whole evening. Next day when we found ourselves to be in the same state, we asked Swami about it. With a smile He said, "You have been praying for a glimpse of this Third Eye during many past lives. In response to your prayers, I gave you a Darshan of it. However, I did not show you even a thousandth part of its brilliance. You could not have withstood that. You could not even bear what you saw! Your present state is the result of that spectacle!" He again created vibhuti and smeared it on each of our foreheads. We gained a semblance of normalcy thereafter.

The custom of celebrating the Navarathri festival in a grand manner in Sai's presence originated even during the Paatha Mandiram period. In those days, Swami would be taken every day in a grand procession. Mrs. Vijayakumari describes the procession of the concluding day of Vijaya

Sai Leela



Dasami, during the celebrations of 1946. The festivities were a gala affair, and in the evening, Swami was taken in procession to a particular tree, to shoot arrows. What for? Let us hear from this devotee of olden times:

By three in the afternoon, they kept ready a cart beautifully decorated with flowers. On this day, Swami was to go the "Juvvi Tree" [a special type of tree, worshipped on this particular day]. As Swami was proceeding, we looked at His Royal mien, holding in His hands a bow and arrows. Verily He appeared to us as Kodanda Rama, Kalyana Rama. He shone forth as a bright light in the Ratnakara dan. What regal grandeur! What solemn dignity! We accompanied Him, offering salutations as Sai travelled on the decorated cart. When we reached the Juvvi Tree, Swami stood straight and, adjusting the bow and taking aim, sent three arrows onto to the top of the tree. Pots of coins showered down! Swami caught some and flung them in all directions. We all scrambled to collect as many as we could, and later stored them carefully. This was a rare good fortune; we had never seen or heard of anything like this before. We inquired the significance of this, and Swami explained that on this auspicious day, the five Pandavas took out from a hole in a tree, the weapons and other items they had stored away [prior to the

commencement of the incognito period of their exile].

While most of the Leelas were enacted on the Chitravathi river, there was a spectacular one where the mighty river Ganges literally came in search of the Lord right up to the Old Mandir! Nothing like had happened ever before, including in earlier Avatars, and nothing like has happened ever since.

One day after Bhajan, we were all sitting around Him stringing flowers into garlands. In this work, no lady could match His skill and speed! Is there any art that He is not proficient in? The garlands that He made were thick and beautiful. Suddenly He got up and said, "Come on, come on! Mother Ganga is coming to visit us." He then went and stood near the huge main gate. After opening the gate, He stood in the centre with open arms and told us, "All of you stand back. None of you should go even one inch beyond these outstretched hands of Mine. Look there! Ganga is rushing forth!" We saw that the river was approaching us with great ferocity, its waves fuming and frothing and rising high in the sky, and with a roaring noise. The river came quite near us, and we children felt greatly scared; we thought, "My God! The river may swallow us!" The river came very near to Swami and was touching the hem of His robe. Except the roaring water, we could not see any of the trees and shrubs that were visible till then. Sai extended His hands forward and touched the river. The stretch of water beneath His hand immediately became quiet and serene but the waters beyond were still frighteningly turbulent. Swami glanced at us and said, "Go inside and bring flowers, coconut, turmeric powder, and kumkum." We did as instructed and then offered the

One morning, I found a group of young men from a college in Bangalore praying to Baba to take them to the top of the hill on the left bank of the Chitravathi river. They hoped that once there, Baba would take from the famous tamarind tree [Kalpavriksham], fruits of different species. I too joined in the appeal but Baba was determinedly silent for a while. He then said sharply, "Do I require that particular tree? Any tree will do, will it not?" We were filled with the hope that He would give us fruits from some other tree and make it immortal! But no; instead He continued, "Why do you imagine that I want a tree? Is not sand good enough?" We now thought that He would give us something from the river-bed. Soon we were disillusioned. For He said, "Why do I need the sand of the river-bed? Will not any sand do?" Since building construction was in progress in Prasanti Nilayam, truck loads of sand had been heaped on one side. So I said, "Swami, perhaps we can sit on this sand heap itself." Swami retorted, "Do you think that creation of something out of sand alone is a miracle? Is sand so essential?" We were stumped and did not know what to say. I just then recalled that Baba created many objects with a mere wave of His hand. Meanwhile, He continued, "Should I create something so that you can see a miracle? Is not your existence itself a miracle of Mine?" He then rose and walked away, leaving us stunned by the revelation that He was none other than the Incarnation of the One Universal God.

N.Kasturi, in *Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram*, Vol III

Sai Leela

flowers, turmeric powder, and kumkum to the River Goddess. We were quite nervous as we did so. Thereafter, Swami broke the coconuts, offered them to Mother Ganga, and, placing His palm on the surface of the river, said, "We are very happy that you came to visit us. Ganga, now go back please!" As he spoke these words, He affectionately patted the waves with both His hands. As if thrilled by His gentle touch, the fury of the waters subsided and the river receded completely. We rubbed our eyes and gazed in disbelief in all four directions. Not a drop of water was to be seen anywhere! There was absolutely no trace of water anywhere on the ground. Swami's robe was also dry. Surprise! It was all a glorious surprise, the river going back as suddenly as it had come. We were totally baffled. Swami continued to stand still, and we were worried that the river might come back! The Director of these marvellous miracles laughed aloud and pointed in the direction of His feet. We saw there a garland of jasmine flowers wrapped around His cute little feet! He picked up the garland, smelt it, and then distributed the flowers to everyone. Each jasmine bud was almost the size of a rose, and was softer to the touch than cotton. Its sweet fragrance spread in all directions. Most reverentially we placed the flowers on our closed eyes and then wore them in our hair.

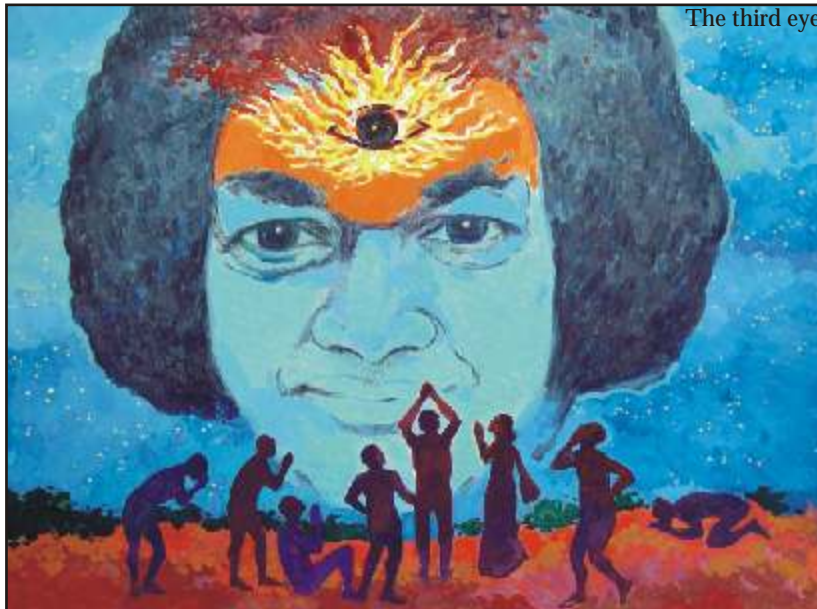
As remarked earlier, Swami appears to have clamped down on Leelas after 1950, when He moved to the present Mandir. But the cut-off was not totally abrupt. Now and then, he showered His Love on old-timers with Leelas of a delectable variety. Here is a description of one of them.

Swami had shifted from the old Mandir to the new one. We had to admit that after His shifting here, the number of devotees had increased considerably. In the old Mandir,

we would say "What a crowd!" if there were fifty or sixty people. Now, the crowd had increased to hundreds. Soon it would swell to thousands and lakhs.

While staying in the old Mandir, as soon as it was evening we would go the banks of the Chitravathi river and romp playfully on the hillock there. Now, we were able to do that only twice a week. One full moon night, Sai Gopala said, "Don't cook anything. We'll cook on the banks of the Chitravathi river and eat." We felt greatly excited. With tremendous joy we packed vessels, provisions and so on onto a cart, and

being cooked in those vessels. The aroma of delicious food penetrated our nostrils while pangs of hunger tore our stomachs. We gathered around Swami and clamoured for food. Swami said, "But we do not have leaves to serve the food on". Swami summoned two boys and said, "If you go towards the right side, you will see a pond filled with lotuses. Get some lotus leaves from there." They ran and fetched them. Were they lotus leaves? Oh my good God! They were so big that people could be seated on them! We had never seen such big leaves in our lives. The leaves were arranged in rows and we sat down, eager to eat. Mother Sai began serving food. Oh those flavours! I cannot describe them. It was a superb repast. [After it was all over], with great difficulty we returned to the Mandir. We could not walk properly nor breathe easily. Even on the following day, our stomachs felt full! Swami looked at us and said, "Do you think it was an ordinary meal that you ate? No, it was a Divine Feast! That is why you are not hungry even now."



The third eye

followed Sai Ram like a band of monkeys. It was eleven o'clock at night. Swinging on the cradle, singing songs, running about, jumping up and down, we were tired and exhausted. We collapsed on the sand and said, "Swami! We are very hungry!! Please quickly make some food for us." Our Hero immediately entered the scene. We said to ourselves, "Oh great God! How is He going to cook? There is no stove nor firewood." Full of doubts, we unloaded the cart and placed all the vessels in a row, the big and the small, with their lids on. We simply did exactly as He had instructed us. Swami did not need any stove! He just took a stick in His hand and went about tapping each of the lids, mumbling at the same time words like, "Sambar", "Rice," "Rasam," "Payasam," "Chutney," and so on. We then heard a spluttering noise as if food was

The Leelas of this type have not quite stopped altogether but they certainly are few and far between. Here is an example of a Leela that was performed in the seventies. Swami was in Brindavan at that time, and one day, He suddenly came to the boys Hostel rather early in the morning. The students and the Warden hurriedly gathered in Swami's presence. Baba then asked the Warden, "Are all the boys here?" The Warden looked around and said, "I think so Swami." Swami then asked for a particular boy. The boy's name was called out but he was not there. He was in the garden collecting flowers for offering to Swami. Even as everyone was wondering where this boy was, he entered the hall. He was taken aback to see all the boys

Sai Leela

Ganga comes to Swami



there and also Swami! Bhagavan knew why the boy came late but for the benefit of the others, He asked, "Where were you and what were you doing?" Hesitantly, the boy answered. Swami was pleased with the reply and then said, "Take this." He moved His hand as if He was throwing something to the boy who was at the other end of the room. Baba's hand was empty but suddenly, a laddu [a sweet dish] formed in the air and flew towards the boy! Everyone was tremendously excited, and the eyes of all the boys were shining. Swami looked around, smiled and said, "Boys you also want laddus?" Naturally, all the boys shouted in chorus: "Yes Swami!" Swami replied, "Very good," and asked a boy to go the kitchen and bring a big empty vessel. The boy did as instructed. Everyone was now watching with great expectations. They thought that Swami would do a miracle and fill the vessel with laddus. Swami simply turned to the Warden and said, "Ask the cook to make laddus, put them in this vessel and then distribute to the boys!" With a chuckle and twinkle in His eyes, Swami then walked out!

Sai's Leelas do not stop with miracles directly performed by Him. There are others that one is hardly aware of; yet, they go on all the time, perhaps increasing day by day. What type of *Leelas* are these? That should be clear from the following extract of the conversation between Bhagavan and John Hislop.

HISLOP: *This morning in the taxi from the airport, even the driver described his marvellous experiences of Swami's Leelas. And the Bombay Airport officers told other miraculous stories about happenings in their homes.*

SAI: *Leelas are occurring throughout India in millions and millions of homes. Swami keeps His hand down so that publicity about these Leelas will not spread.*

The most common among the *Leelas* occurring in homes is the appearance of *vibhuti* on Swami's photos. At times, nectar also appears. There is an amusing incident associated with the appearance of nectar on Swami's photo.

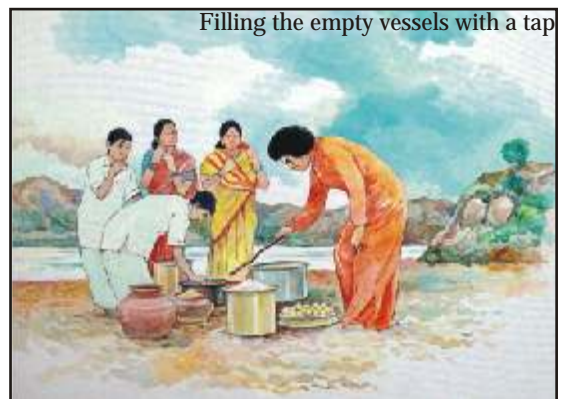
Nectar used to regularly appear on one of the big pictures of Swami displayed in the Super Speciality Hospital in Puttaparthi. Once, a few years after the Hospital was opened, the then President of India, Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma was going round and visiting the various wings. The President was accompanied by Bhagavan, who pointed out the various features. When the President came to the room where nectar was oozing from Swami's photo, the doctor there drew attention to the phenomenon. The President immediately stayed back to examine the picture while Swami moved ahead. Missing the President by His side, Swami then turned and called out, "When I am here, why are you looking at a photo?" This was not just a casual or humorous remark made in a light vein; there is a deep meaning behind it. In fact, on many occasions when Swami materialises an object, it immediately becomes an item of worship. On such occasions, Swami says, "You are worshipping the mere gross object instead

of devoting attention to the hand from which it came." Sometimes, He makes it even more explicit: "The Creator is more important than Creation!"

Leelas are often mistaken to be just miracles; they are not; the Grace behind the miracle is more important. A devotee once said to Baba, "Swami, all Your *Leelas* must be faithfully chronicled, for the benefit of posterity. They are so wonderful." Bhagavan smiled and replied, "You are asking for the impossible. You may be able to collect all the water flowing in the River Ganges through the ages but collecting accounts of My *Leelas* is impossible! There are so many of them. I alone know about all of them; no one else does and no one can." Indeed this is true, especially if considers Swami's physical manifestation in far off places and in the houses of people who have never heard of Baba, the appearance of *vibhuti* on Swami's photos all over the world, etc.

The *Leelas* of God do not ever cease, and their variety is endless! They happen all the time but often they are missed because of our lack of faith. But when the *Avatar* directly performs them before our eyes, our faith is restored. *Leelas* are expressions of God's Love. Perhaps, they are also His way of inducing us to have faith in Him and to Love Him! ■

Filling the empty vessels with a tap



Renunciation



Bhakthi and the attitude of surrender that is its final fruits will give you great courage to meet any emergency; such courage is what is called Renunciation. The story of Mohajith is a good example of this highest type of detachment.

Mohajith, the Prince, went to a Sage in the forest and sought guidance in the spiritual path. The sage asked him whether he had conquered attachment as his name indicated. The Prince said that not only he, but every one in his kingdom had! So the Sage started to test the truth of this claim.

The sage took the Prince's robes, soaked them in blood and hastened to the Palace Gate with the gruesome story of the murder of the Prince by some ruffians in the jungle. The maid whom he met refused to hurry with the news to the Royal apartments because she said, "He was born, he died; what is the special urgency of this news that I should interrupt my regular routine and run to the King and Queen?"

When at last he got an audience and was able to communicate the sad news to the father, he sat unruffled, whispering to himself, "The bird flew off the tree on which it had alighted to take rest." The Raani too was unmoved. She told the sage that this Earth is a caravanserai, where men come and stay for the night and when dawn breaks,

one by one, they tramp their different ways. Kith and kin are the words we use for the attachment to the travellers cultivated in the caravanserai during the short term of acquaintance.

The wife of the "dead" Prince was also unaffected; she said, "Husband and wife are like two pieces of wood drifting down a flooded river; they float near each other for some time and when some current comes between, they are parted: each must move on to the sea at its own rate and in its own time. There is no need to grieve over the parting of the two; it is in the very nature of Nature that it should be so."

The sage was overjoyed to see this steady and sincere Vairaagya (dispassion) in the rulers and the ruled. He came back to the forest and told the Prince that while he was away, a hostile army had invaded his Kingdom and slain the entire royal family and captured his Kingdom and enslaved his subjects. He took the news calmly and said, "All this is bubble, impermanent, flimsy. Let it go the way of the bubble. Guide me to reach the Infinite, the Imperishable." Such courage comes out of the Grace of the Lord; it needs generations of learning and struggle. Meanwhile, you must start with the first step, the cleansing of the mind and the cultivation of virtue. Even if you do not start with that step, at least do not laugh at those who do, and discourage them. Do at least this much! ■

Dissolution of the Ego

We now come to an important topic the dissolution of the ego. The term ego is normally associated with a sense of pride, arrogance, etc. Here it is used in a larger sense it denotes the whole gamut of what is often called body-consciousness.

Ego is built into us from the start. In a manner of speaking, God has put it into us, and not without reason. One may then ask, "If that is the case, why try to get rid of ego?" Well, there is a good reason.

Let us start by looking at the origin of body-consciousness. One of the remarkable characteristics of a living being is that it knows that it exists. Many years ago, scientists were trying to formally describe a living entity. They said a living entity must have three characteristics. 1) It must exhibit metabolism [i.e., it must be able to take in high-grade energy (as food) and reject low-grade energy as waste]. 2) It must be able to reproduce. 3) It must show growth and decay. From the point of view of science, this operational definition may be OK, but it misses one vital aspect of the living being, namely that it is CONSCIOUS that it is alive. It is AWARE of its being. Science has not yet been able to come to grip with consciousness, and that perhaps is the reason why it has side stepped this aspect.

Let us take a rat. It knows it exists. It knows it is alive. And it wants to keep its life intact. If it sees a cat, it knows that the cat is different from itself. In fact, it knows that the cat had better be avoided! In other words, Nature has endowed living beings with a certain amount of body-consciousness (BC) for the purpose of survival and such other things. If that is the case, then why make such a big fuss about BC? Why make a special effort to get rid of it? Is it not like throwing away a boon of Nature?

This is where one must understand the special position and role of a human being. A human being cannot escape being conscious of his body, at least some of the time. For example, if there is an acute stomach ache one cannot help feeling it! But body consciousness ought not to develop into attachment, and then lead on to a number of undesirable things. It should not, in particular, develop into pride, arrogance, and promote an intense feeling of 'mine'. People, for example, are proud of their physical beauty. This is the direct result of body consciousness. Truly speaking, one is NOT the body; why then feel it is 'mine' and be proud about it? The feeling of 'mine' creates a strong sense of possessiveness, which is bad for spiritual progress. Why? That is what we shall examine next.

If a person is dominated by the feeling, "This is mine", etc., then that person might also want to acquire that which is now not his. All territorial wars of olden days started with this kind of ambition on the part of various kings. One may say: "That's OK, but why dub it as not in conformity with spirituality?" This is a crucial point and needs to be examined carefully.

The entire Universe is packed with diversity. No two stars are identical, no two planets are identical, and no two blades of grass are identical. Indeed, even the so-called identical twins are not identical. Perception of diversity may be a necessity for purpose of living in the world and surviving in it. Where lower beings are concerned, that is all they bothered about - to survive and to procreate. For them, being immersed in diversity is perfectly OK. For human beings, it is NOT OK. Why? Because, a human is not born for the limited purposes that form the goal of animal life. Swami uses four words to describe mundane and animal-like existence eating, drinking, sleeping

and dying! Human life ought not to consist of just these four. One might argue: "Don't trivialise like that. Humans exhibit creativity and originality. They explore, they compose (poems, songs and music), they write, they paint, they invent, they make discoveries, and so on. Do not all these make it clear that human are way above animals?"

Yes, humans do exhibit remarkable creativity. But that alone is not enough. They ought to rise to even greater level. What is that? They should know who exactly they are. They ought to realise that beneath the diversity that is so prominent in the external world, there lies a Cosmic Oneness. It is that substratum of Divine Unity that is far more important than the diversity that preoccupies man today. The gift of human birth has been conferred not merely for the purpose of exhibiting creativity and achieving all kinds of worldly triumphs and success, but more for discovering the latent Divinity within.

God and ego simply do not go together. If the Divinity latent within has to be discovered - and that is why we have been given human birth then clearly, everything possible and necessary for reducing ego/body consciousness ought to be done that is for sure.

As someone said, "EGO means EDGING GOD OUT!" That should make it clear why we must get rid of ego as fast as we can!!

ADDITIONAL NOTES RELATING TO THE ABOVE

- Seekers everywhere and belonging to all faiths have clearly understood that EGO is the greatest obstacle to Self-realisation.
- Ego makes a person think, "I am great. I did that, I achieved this," and so on.
- The truth, however, is very

Dissolution of the Ego

different. A person claims he is great. In reality, that person is great because of HIM!

- Let us examine this further. We were small, and then we became big. How? Because of HIM! He has built into our systems the mechanisms for growth.

- Similarly, we knew nothing to start with but later we learnt many things. How? We may claim that is because of the effort we made. No doubt the effort is not dismissed, but who gave us the capacity to learn? Can a crocodile learn calculus, a lion acquire proficiency in literature, or a tiger become an expert in trigonometry?

- In every case, it is HE who has provided the “seed capital” in the form of comprehension, learning capability, etc. Without those, we would be nowhere; and yet, seldom do we recognise that we have received such a matchless blessing, much less, who gave that blessing.

- According to scientists, the genes that control the development of the tongue of humans and chimpanzee are very similar barely five percent different. It is further claimed, that it is precisely this five percent difference that has enabled man to speak. That may be true as far as the flexibility of the movement of the tongue is concerned. But the faculty of speech is not connected with the tongue alone the brain plays a key role. It is the creative brain-power endowed by God specially to man that enables him to speak, and not merely the extra flexibility of the tongue that he enjoys compared to the chimp.

- Getting back to the dissolution of the ego, this is not merely an academic topic or a purposeless exercise.

- Many of today's problems can be traced directly to ego. The Second World War, for example, could perhaps be traced to Hitler's massive pride and ego. Having said this, it must also be added that one must be careful in making judgements like

this. One cannot naively segment and declare, “This is good, that is bad, and that the two have no connection whatsoever.”

- It must be understood that good can become bad, and equally, the bad can transform into good. Thus it is often said, “Every saint has a past, and every sinner has a future!”

- What it boils down to is that one cannot place himself on a high pedestal and look down upon those supposedly bad. Everyone, without any exception whatsoever, has a duty to check ego, and eliminate it altogether if possible.

- If individual egos are kept in check, then ego snowballing in Society will not occur, and there would be no place for aberrations like Hitler. But if individuals want popularity or are fired by perverted ideals and start making inflammatory speeches, then individual ego can spark collective arrogance, leading finally to massive disaster.

- Ego is a great enemy to Peace. There is a beautiful story that Swami often tells in this connection. Once a devotee told Baba, “I want Peace.” Baba smiled and said, “Simple. First cross out the I, then remove want. What is finally left? Peace!” This might sound like a play on words. To correct that impression, Baba has also explained His remark. He says, “When I ask you to cross I, it means remove ego! Next I ask you to remove want. I am not merely asking you to drop the word want from your sentence with three words. I am asking you to limit your desires; that really is what I am telling you! If you eliminate ego and reduce your wants, how can Peace elude you any longer?”

POINTS TO PONDER OVER

- The most direct manifestation of ego is Pride. The opposite of pride is humility. Thus, one way of crushing ego is to practice humility. Incidentally, it is important to train children in being humble. Humility

should not be confused with cowardice! Gandhi was no coward; but at the same time, he was most humble, always.

- Why does ego surface? And at what stage in one's growth?

- Can you come up with any step by step procedure for systematically eliminating ego that you can place before the members of your Study Circle for their consideration?

- Ego should not be interpreted merely as pride. Pride is just one aspect of the manifestation of ego. Ego is associated with the lower self, and basically it leads to what is called body consciousness [Baba refers to this as *Deha Abhimanam*, meaning literally love for the body]. This body consciousness manifests as attachments to all sorts of things connected with the body/lower self. Thus, attachment to one's blood relatives, to one's property, etc., are all indicative of body consciousness.

- List a few complex situations in human life and analyse first how they are connected with ego [in most cases they would be!]. Next, examine how the removal of ego could lead to the solution of the problem.

- Like individuals, entire communities and even countries can be driven by ego. Ego is almost certainly at the root of all the major conflicts in the world today. One would find that in every case, the two warring parties are rigid in their stance, and unwilling to try compromise of any sort. If only they tried understanding, accommodation and love, most of the problems would vanish. That shows what a blinding effect ego can have. People are prepared to suffer any amount rather than adjust, accommodate and live in love.

- Collect as many sayings of Baba as possible on body consciousness.

- It is said that pride goes on horse back before a fall. Collect stories that illustrate the point. ■

Who decides our fate? God or Us?

Recently, we received a rather unusual letter from one of our listeners about a young person who had committed suicide. The event had greatly disturbed our listener who wanted to know many things such as: "Is suicide also fated? Why did not Swami overpower this boy and save him? He was so devoted to Swami. Can we blame everything on *Karma*? Should I console myself saying this is all *Karma*? When all are Swami's children and when He loves all equally, why did He not save this young man?" So on the questions went.

This is not the first time I have been asked about fate and its inevitability. The business of what is fated and what is not, etc., has come up again and again. By the way, I have already recorded a full talk on the questions raised by the listener, but I thought that nevertheless, I might perhaps write a few lines for the benefit of those who might have missed the broadcast.

The writer of the letter is evidently overwhelmed by sorrow and since sorrow belongs to world of duality [in which, incidentally, all of us are deeply immersed], may be I should deal with this entire question from the perspective of duality. Now in the dual picture, we have two basic entities, God and man. That is point number one.

Point number two; God is the puppeteer, and man is the puppet this all of us know. But this is a quite a unique kind of puppet show. In what way? Well, you see there are two strings but God does not hold both; instead, He keeps one string and hands over the other to man. That is point number three.

Now why on earth does God do this strange thing? Because He wants to test us, that is why. Remember what

Swami says: TEST IS TASTE FOR GOD!

OK, God keeps one string and gives the other to man; what happens next? Well, God now holds the string loose and just watches, or, to use Swami's language, He functions as *Sakshibhootam*, that is, as a Witness! Meanwhile, man takes firm hold of the string available to him and pulls it. In what manner? According to what



his Mind advises. Why on earth does man do that? Because man is a slave of the Mind, that is why!

OK, what happens then? Simple. The Mind is dragged by the senses into the outer world with all its illusions, and man follows the Mind. Net result is that man becomes accountable for his actions; and the accounts are settled through the famous Law of Reflection, Reaction, Resound [which is really another name for the famous Law of *Karma*]. As Shakespeare said, we ourselves are the masters of our fate and our fault does not lie in our stars!

But is this not patently unfair? Not at all. You see, God has been gracious and told man, "Son, why do you bother to hold on to that string and keep pulling it? Instead why don't you just give it Me? Relax and leave the driving to Me!" But man is not prepared to do that; so, how can he complain?

May be I ought to explain all this a bit more in detail. Basically, what God says is that "If you drive, you take the responsibility. If I drive, I take the responsibility." In terms of practical details, what it means is that if we let our Mind run our lives, then we become accountable, and the accounts are settled, as I described earlier, through the Law of *Karma*. Sometimes the accounts are settled early, and sometimes they are settled late. This is the general principle.

This now raises the question: "How exactly does one hand over the string in our hand back to God?" That is what surrender is all about. Swami has spoken about surrender so many times but few of us have the patience to study in depth what He has said. I shall not repeat all that Swami has said earlier but would instead like to place before you one or two pertinent facts.

In worldly battles, when a person surrenders to another, one person emerges as the victor and the other as the vanquished. But when one surrenders to God, there is no victor nor vanquished; God and the person who has surrendered become One! OK, so what? How does it affect daily life? And how does that lead to escape from the clutches of *Karma*?

Let me illustrate first the impact on daily life, by considering a conflict between two persons, A and B say. Now we all know that the world is full

Who decides our fate? God or Us?

of conflicts from the individual level like between husband and wife, for example to conflict between communities and even nations. Right now, there is a big row in Africa where ten countries are having a huge argument about the waters of the Nile, as to who is entitled to how much of that water. Keeping this sort of thing mind, let us turn now to A and B. It so happens that they have come together to discuss their long-standing differences. They have had many meetings before and bitter arguments. But this time, just before the meeting, both of them have independently surrendered to God. When they meet, this is how the conversation goes.

“Sai Ram. Nice to meet you again. So, what's your problem really? I want to understand it clearly.”

“My problem? I don't have any because I have surrendered to God! What's your problem?”

“This is really strange. I don't have any problem because I too have surrendered to God! Now isn't this absolutely wonderful?”

“Sure! But then there appear to be some practical difficulties. Now that we have met, what do you say to our taking a close look at these difficulties so that they can be put out of the way?”

“I entirely agree with you. Let's examine all the practical issues and make sure that everything is absolutely fine in the future.”

I am sure you are getting the hang of what I am trying to say. You might object and say, “Listen, you are being utterly naïve and even stupid! Do you think such a thing is ever possible? Not even in dreams! Be realistic man!”

That is the problem, is it not? When we say it is not realistic, what we mean

is that we simply are not prepared to look at issues and problems, giving up even an iota of self-interest. Why are we so attached to self-interest? Because of body-consciousness. Is body-consciousness a desirable thing? Not at all, and Swami has spoken out against it so many times. But still we want to hang on to it. Why? Because we are dominated by the Mind and not the Heart [read Swami]. What if we give up body-consciousness? Then God takes over and we get out of the clutches of *Karma*.

As Jesus says, we can serve only one Master and have to choose between God and Mammon. We cannot say we love Swami dearly and yet allow our Mind to be the Master. When the Mind is the Master it means we are its slave. That is not correct. We must instead be the slave of the Heart i.e., God. It is to drive home this point that Swami repeatedly says: MASTER THE MIND AND BECOME A MASTER-MIND.

People may say: “All this we know. Has not even Arjuna complained how difficult it is to conquer the Mind?” Agreed. But you know what? Our beloved Swami is not asking us to actually conquer the Mind. He says instead, just try and show Me that you are serious. That is enough; but we are shy of even trying; that really is our problem.

Take a simple thing like Unity. It is no secret that there is a lot of disunity even amongst devotees. Recently a big group of devotees sent a letter to Swami, complete with over a hundred signatures and all that, complaining and carrying tales about other devotees. Is this proper? Is this how we should treat Swami? Would it not pain Him to see how divided His children are [at the human level that is]?

A few words now about how Swami actually helps, even though we often

think He is indifferent and all that. Let me give an example. When I was in Japan many years ago and was speaking to the devotees in Tokyo, a young lady said that she had once come to Prashanti Nilayam with her mother who was suffering from what was believed to be terminal illness. But during *Darshan*, Swami gave the mother of that woman just one look and she was cured. Was that not compassion?

On the other hand, there have been devotees who were afflicted with cancer and died, right here. One may ask: “Why did not Swami save them?” Who can say? God has His reasons. But this I do know; in a number of cases, the persons having cancer did not have any pain whatsoever. Few realise what a great miracle this is. Cancer patients suffer tremendous pain especially in the last stages, and often doctors administer morphine to drug them. If a cancer patient is relieved of pain, it is only because of Swami's Grace.

As Ramakrishna Paramahansa once pointed out, God's Grace works in most mysterious ways. Let me give an example. Many years ago when Swami went to North India, there was a lady in one town who received much Grace from Bhagavan. However, Swami appeared to ignore the child of that lady. The child was blind and the lady repeatedly begged Swami to give eyesight to that child. But Swami did not respond. One day, Swami Karunyananda who was accompanying Swami on the tour asked, “Bhagavan, why are so indifferent to the pleas of that woman? Why don't you bring some joy into her life?” Swami sternly asked Karunyananda, “Do you think just because of your name, you have more compassion than Me? I know the past, the present and the future whereas you can see only the present. In its previous birth, this person was a very cruel man who kidnapped young children, blinded them and

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made them into beggars. The money they earned was taken away by him. In this birth, that *Jiva* is paying the dues. If I grant eyesight now, that debt re-payment would be delayed. Moreover, the person, not having purified, would behave badly and add to his debt burden. Do you want all that to happen? I know what to give, whom to give and when to give.”

There is a deep message in the above. Let me now move on to a few residual questions. Firstly, do we really have to exhaust all of past *Karma*? Can there be no rebate at all? Who says not? God is so gracious that in fact if He sees the slightest improvement in us, He goes out of the way to be kind to us. Only, we must have faith in this.

Secondly, any simple formula for ensuring surrender? Indeed there is, and it has been given by the Lord Himself. He says: 1) Always think of Me [read, constantly chant My Name]. 2) Always think you are working for Me, though you may have a worldly boss. 3) Do whatever you are doing as if you are doing it to please Me. 4) Offer whatever it is you are doing to Me. [It is assumed that one is doing good and not bad actions!]

Just keep doing this and God will take care of everything this is His Solemn Promise. We need not be bothered about debt cancellation, *Karma* being wiped out, surrender and all that sort

of thing.

Swami is so kind, He says, “Listen, just give up your bad habits and say you are doing it for Me!” Can one ever get a better bargain? Sometimes, people say all this is very difficult. But I ask in return, “If we love Swami deeply, is it difficult to do something that would please Him?” The power of Love is infinite and if we truly love Swami, then things that we would normally consider difficult do become possible.

Love also implies deep faith. Sometimes, Swami may test and we should be ready to go through the test. There is a poem that I recently came across, that is relevant in this context. We reproduce that poem elsewhere in this issue. So on this subject, I shall not say anything more.

But this I would like to say by way of concluding this reflection. Recall what happened to Ramana Maharishi and Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Both of them suffered from cancer. Why these noble souls? Surely they must have exhausted all their past *Karma*. This is where a new dimension enters the picture. You see, suffering is not always the result of past *Karma*. Sometimes, God makes noble souls suffer so that they set examples for others. Just recently, Swami went through a hip fracture. Why? To teach us a lesson on how to rise above body-consciousness. I am

not making this up; you can go to many of His Discourses delivered soon after He recovered from the fracture.

Some years ago, Swami was telling a few of us about His experiences as a school boy in Kamalapuram, when He was subjected to much punishment. I then ventured to ask, “Swami, we have to suffer on account of past *Karma*. You are different. Why then did You have to face punishment?” He smiled and replied, “Bangaru, how else could I teach the lesson of *Kshama* [forbearance]?”

Yes, God does move in mysterious ways and we can never fathom His actions. But of this we can be sure: Whatever He does is always for our good, even though it might superficially not appear to be so. But then, we must allow Him to be good to us. If we hang on to one string, we cannot expect Him to come to our rescue. Being devoted is not enough. It is necessary but not sufficient, as mathematicians would put it. What God expects is surrender, or at least an attempt to surrender. If we take that step firmly, He certainly will take not just ten but hundreds. Many have tried and discovered this to be absolutely true. It is for us to make that discovery once more.

Thank you and Jai Sai Ram.

G.VENKATARAMAN

COMING NEXT.....
IN H2H !

The teachings of Plato on education. A parallelism of Swami's teachings on Educare!



When Nature wants a Man

By Angela Morgan

When Nature wants to drill a man,
And thrill a man,
And skill a man.
When Nature wants to mould a man
To play the noblest part;
When she yearns with all her heart
To create so great and bold a man
That all the world shall praise
Watch her method, watch her ways!
How she ruthlessly perfects
Whom she royally elects;
How she hammers him and hurts him,
And with mighty blows converts him
Into trial shapes of clay which only Nature understands
While his tortured heart is crying and he lifts beseeching
hands!

How she bends, but never breaks,
When his good she undertakes. . . .
How she uses whom she chooses
And with every purpose fuses him,
By every art induces him
To try his splendour out
Nature knows what she's about.

When Nature wants to take a man,
And shake a man,
And wake a man;
When Nature wants to make a man
To do the Future's will;
When she tries with all her skill
And she yearns with all her soul
To create him large and whole . . .
With what cunning she prepares him!
How she goads and never spares him,
How she whets him, and she frets him,
And in poverty begets him . . .
How she often disappoints
Whom she sacredly anoints,
With what wisdom she will hide him,
Never minding what betide him
Though his genius sob with slighting and his pride may
not forget!
Bids him struggle harder yet.
Makes him lonely
So that only
God's high messages shall reach him,
So that she may surely teach him
What the Hierarchy planned.
Though he may not understand,
Gives him passions to command.
How remorselessly she spurs him

With terrific ardour stirs him
When she poignantly prefers him

When Nature wants to name a man
And fame a man
And tame a man;
When Nature wants to shame a man
To do his heavenly best . . .
When she tries the highest test
That she reckoning may bring
When she wants a god or king!
How she reins him and restrains him
So his body scarce contains him
While she fires him
And inspires him!

Keeps him yearning, ever burning for a tantalizing goal
Lures and lacerates his soul.
Sets a challenge for his spirit,
Draws it higher when he's near it
Makes a jungle, that he clear it;
Makes a desert that he fear it
And subdue it if he can
So doth Nature make a man.
Then, to test his spirit's wrath
Hurls a mountain in his path
Puts a bitter choice before him

And relentlessly stands o'er him.
"Climb, or perish I" so she says. . . .
Watch her purpose, watch her ways!

Nature's plan is wondrous kind
Could we understand her mind . . .
Fools are they who call her blind.
When his feet are torn and bleeding
Yet his spirit mounts unheeding,
All his higher powers speeding,
Blazing newer paths and fine;
When the force that is Divine
Leaps to challenge every failure and his ardour still is
sweet
And love and hope are burning in the presence of defeat
. . .

Lo, the crisis! Lo, the shout
That must call the leader out.
When the people need salvation
Doth he come to lead the nation. . . .
Then doth Nature show her plan
When the world has found - a MAN!

Why God created Us

During the last couple of weeks, the BBC has been airing many programs on religion. I managed to listen to quite a few of them and found them most absorbing as well as interesting, especially as the BBC has done an extensive global survey on what people round the world think of God, religion etc. Many interesting conclusions have emerged and those interested may visit the BBC web site. Let me mention just a couple of interesting observations that I heard. One was that even atheists pray! The second is the observation of one person who when interviewed said that Spirituality looks Inward while Religion looks outward. I found this observation extremely interesting as well as thought provoking. My purpose in bringing up the BBC features is not to comment upon them perhaps I shall do it later but to draw attention to an interesting story narrated by one of the panellists, a Professor of I forget what. Anyway, the story narrated by the Professor is more interesting than the subject that he/she professes. The story is about a Sufi saint and goes as follows:

One day, the Sufi saint prayed to God.

“Oh God, You are so wonderful. You have created marvellous things in this world. Yet, in this beautiful world created by You, there is so much misery, suffering, pain, violence and what not. Why don't You do something about it?”

“I have done something,” replied God.

“You have done something? Where is that? What is that? I don't see it,” said the Sufi saint in reply.

God then slowly whispered, “Son, I created you!”

Wonderful story is it not? I think there is a deep message and if we reflect carefully, we would realise that Swami is telling us precisely the same thing over and over again. Yes, all we have to do is to serve mankind, remembering that service to man is service to God. If we wipe one tear in one eye, we would be not only making God happy but also experience Ananda ourselves.

By the way, this reminds me of an incident recorded by late Mr. J.R.D Tata, a towering figure in modern India. He was half Parsi and half French, and India was his home. He was an enlightened citizen who incidentally was also a great business manager. He won the highest honour in India, the Bharata Ratna.

Once he invited Mother Teresa to Jamshedpur, where the Tata company has a huge steel plant. Mother came there to participate in a function. After the function was over, Tata took Mother back to Calcutta [about 200 km away] in his private executive jet. The Sun was setting and Mother took out her rosary to pray. Just then, the plane was flying over big slums near Jamshedpur. Tata then said to Mother, “While you are praying to God, why don't you ask Him to do something about poverty and misery?” Mother turned to Tata and said in a stern tone, “Mr. Tata, God does not require our advice. You might instead concentrate on doing your bit by trying to create more jobs!” This has been recorded by Tata himself.

Yes the world is packed with misery by way of providing opportunities for us to experience Ananda. Pure and true joy comes not from expensive vacations, but from service to the Lord. Think about it!

G.VENKATARAMAN

Favourite Festival

A couple of days after Sivarathri, I happened to be in Swami's presence along with two others. Suddenly, Swami asked one of the persons present: “What is your favourite festival?” Soon the same question was posed to others and in every case, we were asked to explain why we voted for a particular festival over the others. I will give all the details of what happened in a later issue, but for now, I want you to tell us what would be your answer! We will publish the interesting responses, and naturally, also describe what happened in the incident referred to above. Of course, you know where to reach us, don't you?

G.VENKATARAMAN

The Mirror



The good you find in others is in you too. The faults you
find in others, are your faults as well. After all, to
recognize something you must know it. The possibilities you
see in others are possible for you as well. The beauty
you see around you, is your beauty. The world around you is
a mirror showing you the person you are.
To change your world, you must change yourself. To blame
and complain will only make matters
worse. Whatever you care about, is your responsibility. What
you see in others shows you
yourself. See the best in others, and you will be your best.
Give to others, and you give to
yourself. Appreciate beauty, and you will be beautiful.
Admire creativity, and you will be creative.
Love and you will be loved. Seek to understand, and you will
be understood. Listen and your
voice will be heard. Teach, and you will learn. Show your
best face to the mirror, And you'll be
happy with the face looking back at you.



Passage to India

Dr. Abdelfattah M. Badawi, Egypt

By absolute coincidence I bought Dr. Mohamed Sadek El-Adawy's book about 'SPIRITUAL THERAPY BETWEEN SCIENCE AND APPLICATION' in which he mentioned on one of its pages that there are some contemporary cases nowadays which prove man's coming back from the world of spirits to re-exist on earth, (reincarnation).

And one of the renowned cases today on the world level is an Indian spiritual master known by the name 'Sai Baba'.

Since I was busy at the time, I actually forgot his book's subject, and after one year I received from one of the western publishers book lists about spiritualism.

I halted at a page including some twenty books about Sai Baba. I remembered where I had previously come upon this name and I selected from that list two books, one of which is titled: 'Sai Baba., The Ultimate Experience', by Phyllis Krystal and the other book titled: 'Walking the Path with Sai Baba' authored by the Australian journalist Howard Murphet. I then sent in a request for these two books and upon their receipt I read them in-depth with much interest. Upon completion of reading about this legendary personality, I felt a strong desire to meet this person, 'Sai Baba' the great spiritual master.

Next I visited the Indian Cultural Centre in Cairo and met with Dr. Ihsan Rahman, the Indian Cultural Adviser and asked him about Sai Baba and whether He was still alive to which he informed me that He had died a while ago, and he then let me know about a Yoga course held at the Indian Cultural Centre, in which I promptly subscribed. In the first Yoga course day, I met Dr. Praphakar, a Yoga instructor, who had just come from India and asked him about Sai Baba and he informed me that there are two personalities in Sai Baba, the first personality which died a long time ago whereas the second personality which is still alive. I felt glad about this news and looked forward to meeting that miraculous man. I wished fervently from the depths of my soul that Sai Baba would disclose to me a prophecy.

After a few weeks following this wish, during my attendance in a scientific conference, I happened to coincidentally sit beside an Indian scholar named Dr. Niela Kanta. This was the first time he travelled out of India. Upon chatting with him I learned that he was an old solicitor of Sai Baba's, the preacher of the great generosity and that he would be able to help me locate him in Brindavan.. He then invited me to attend a world conference to be held in India, where he could facilitate my meeting Sai Baba. I accepted his invitation. I travelled to



India in March 1996 arrived in Bombay and reached Madras to attend the scientific conference, meeting with Dr. Niela Kanta who then guided me to Sai Baba's domicile in Brindavan near the famous city of Bangalore.

Then suddenly a dream became a reality. I sat within the rows of thousands of squatting people awaiting the presence of the great spiritual instructor. While I was still suffering pain in my lower back... and after two hours of waiting, and repetitions of religions psalms, Sai Baba made His appearance, walking among the attendant's rows. As He approached me, the fatigue and exhaustion in my body disappeared,

feeling an unusual energy penetrating my whole body, and even my back pain had suddenly disappeared.

On the closing day, I attended once more, carrying a letter in which I described some wishes wherein I requested the blessing of Sai Baba. I learned that if He takes the letter, this becomes a grand "prophecy". Sai Baba made His appearance, crossed the attendant's rows, where I was luckily sitting and He picked up my letter. I then saw Him before me lifting His empty hand near me and materializing from it ashes in the form of a cone upon one of the attendants head. It was as though I was watching a science fiction movie. Then Sai Baba proceeded forward where He took a seat before the attendants who totaled about one hundred thousand... and I noticed an illuminating halo about His head, ever 'expanding and enlarging. I was unable to believe my eyes. I properly discerned my vision and become sure of the fact of the existence of a shining halo surrounding the great spiritual scholar's head.

After one week from my return from India to Cairo, one of my two written wishes in the letter to Sai Baba was fulfilled. This wish was related to a personal problem which persisted over three years without resolution. Whereas the second wish, its symptoms began to appear.

Most important, however, is the great prophesy of Sai Baba creating a deep-rooted transformation in my heart. My feelings towards God have become a focal point in my thoughts most of the time. This transformation is notable in spite of its being slow. In addition my heart has become filled with love for all people and has become to overflow with joy and happiness. Divine love has developed in the depths of my being and what a joyful feeling it is.

(article from MATHRUBHUMI SRI SATHYA SAI SUPPLEMENT 2002)

The Mother of all Lectures

His name is Maturu Phalguna Rao. He hails from a very remote village in India, Mamidipalli. He is only 26 years in age. He has his name etched in the Guinness book of world records!

On August 21st 2003, He embarked on a mission that required great confidence and and determination. His aim was to give the longest lecture in the world. The earlier record was by an American who lectured for 51 hours 44 minutes and 17 seconds....

On that day, there were thousands of witnesses , a team from the Guinness book firm, and 20 professors watching this young guy. He was to be allowed only a 15 minute break every 8 hours!

Phalguna Rao started his lecture with a confident look, on 21st August at 11.45 am. On and on he went ...stopping for just 10 minutes every 8 hours to pop in some glucose and a few apple slices....

Lectures, any student will tell you, are usually long....but this one was the mother of all lectures.....it stretched for sixty hours! Yes, Phalguna Rao lectured on computer fundamentals for a continuous 60 hours non stop! The lecture ended on the 23rd of August 2003 at 11.46 pm! He had set a new world record! His name found a place in the famous Guinness book of world records!

Ask Phalguna Rao , the secret of his strength and success and he remembers Bhagavan Sri Satya Sai Baba with gratitude. He says he derived this confidence when he was a student in the Sri Satya Sai Gurukulam , at Rajahmundry, from the sixth to the tenth standard. The discipline, the education and encouragement he received there had a major role in shaping his 'never say die' attitude. The

highlight of his stay at the gurukul were the trips to Prasanthi Nilayam when Swami would pour His love on them. At this point, Phalguna Rao takes out the cherished group photograph that Swami had taken with his class and shows it to us with pride.

“ Just before the lecture, I had a lot of cough troubling me...I prayed to Swami and started the lecture. For the next sixty hours the cough just disappeared....I believe this is His grace!”, he says.

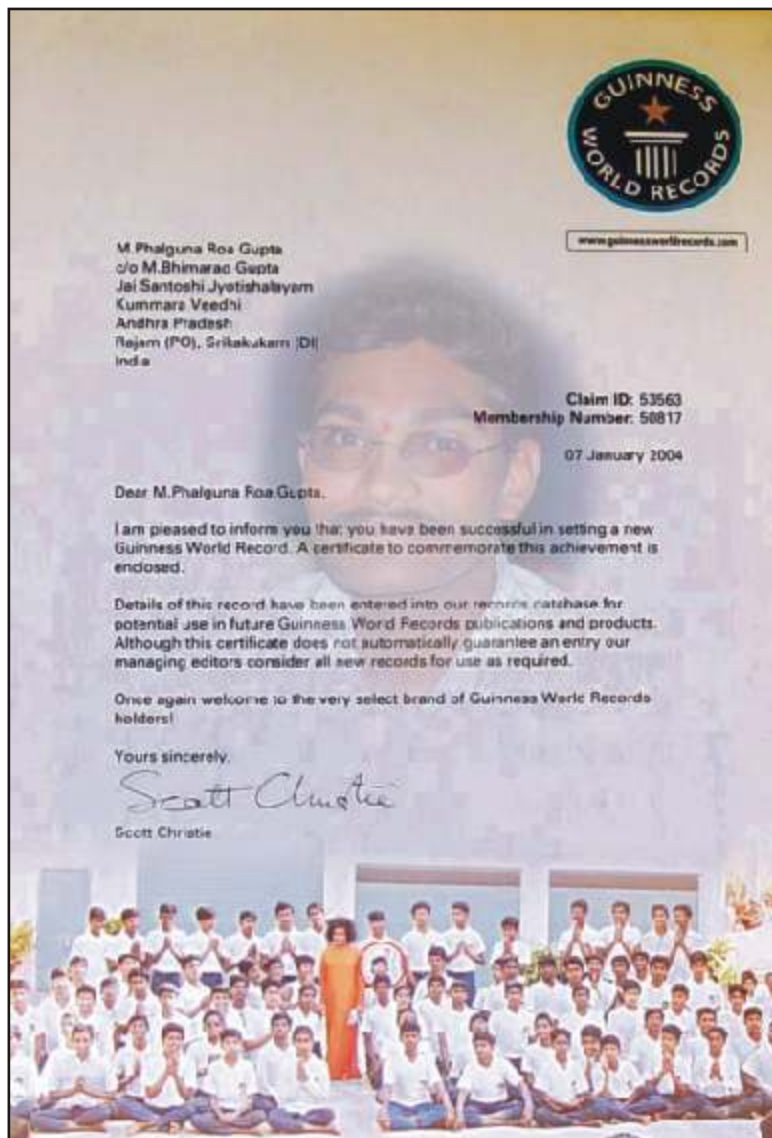
What are his plans for the future?

“ In the future, I would like to establish free libraries on computer education and teach computers to under privileged children.”

Hmm, a noble aspiration indeed!

Heart to Heart wishes Phalguna Rao all the best in his aspirations!

So, young brothers and sisters, this is what *self confidence* coupled with *Divine Grace* can do to anyone. That includes you too!!



The H2H Crossword # 1

Prema, Santhi, Daya, Sathya....do these words sound familiar to you? 'Yes', is it? O.K...then, you know these words. You know that these words refer to all good things, Love, Peace, Compassion, Truth.....And you also know that these words are not English or Greek or Latin. Yes, You guessed it right! These are all words, they say, in the language of the gods, the mother of all Indian languages Sanskrit.

Now, here is a simple exercise for you to know how familiar to you are some of the common words in Sanskrit. Each clue below the puzzle gives hint to a common Sanskrit word to fit into the crossword jumble.

There are 20 clues in all. Does not matter, if you can decipher only a few...there are answers elsewhere in this issue, along with explanation. You are surely going to learn some good Sanskrit words today. If you can solve more than 15 of the clues, you are already good and if 10-15 is within your reach, you know a lot but need to know more and we are there to help you.

So, go ahead, read each clue carefully and give it a try!



Across

1. The wealth of the spiritual realm (7)
2. Possessiveness leading to peril (4)
3. Devotional singing in chorus (6)
4. What do you do to train your mind to concentrate? (6)
5. The sect of the mother (4)
6. In flame the flame divine (5)
7. Formless, attributeless, the absolute (7)
8. The divine name with a vermilion mark (5)
9. The deepest of spiritual truths embodied in one alphabet (4)
10. An expression, a manifestation of divine glory and grandeur (6)

Down

2. That veils the divine from the mortal (4)
6. One full lifetime of the many (5)
7. Not an animal, a human (4)
11. Where do spiritual aspirants converge? (6)
12. Ambrosia celestial (6)
13. Joy, bliss, peace call it what ever u want cause u can't measure it (6)
14. Near, not far; second, not first (3)
15. With this prefix, originated Ma cow (2)
16. Mystic formula formulated to illumine the mind (6)
17. Divine Mother (3)

(See page 29 for solved crossword puzzle)

Seek Divine Grace for Success

It was the battle of Kurukshetra. The two mighty armies of the Kauravas and the Pandavas were facing each other. A deathly stillness was in the air. It was the eerie silence that precedes the mayhem and gore to follow. The silence and tension was so palpable, it could be cut with a knife.

Just before the signal for the attack could be given, there was a little stir in the ranks of the Pandavas. Yudhistira, the eldest of the Pandava brothers and commander-in-chief of the Pandava army, got off his chariot and slowly but deliberately, walked across the no-man's land separating the two armies.

What was going on? Did Yudhistira lose his nerve? Is he going to surrender, before a single arrow could be fired? No. Even in the tension filled last moment, even in spite of the war setting, Yudhistira, the very embodiment of *dharma*, was holding fast to tradition, and respecting *Bharatiya* culture. He was crossing over to get the blessings for victory in the war from the very elders who were now arrayed against him. From his grand-father Bhishma, now the commander in chief of the Kaurava army, from his gurus Dronacharya and Kripacharya, and other elders who had joined forces with Duryodhana, his arch enemy. And history records, how that one single act of asking for the blessings

from the elders enabled the Pandavas to conquer all odds and ensure victory in the battle that followed, a battle enshrined in the history books as a victory of good over evil, of *dharma* over *adharma*.

While this scene represents an extreme, which perhaps almost all of us will never face, the philosophy behind the act gets repeated often in myriad different ways.

The setting was Sai Kulwant Hall, February 2004. It was the Study Holidays, the calm before the start of the mayhem to follow in the guise of the CBSE (Central Board for Secondary Education) examination. (Note: The CBSE is a common All-India Public Exam conducted for the students of the 10th and 12th Grades of all the High Schools affiliated to this Board. This year about 900,000 students from all over India took this exam.) While students all over the country were busy studying and preparing hard, the students of the Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School were literally singing, singing a bouquet of songs to please and earn the blessings of their Lord before this all important examination, the first real test in their young lives.

After getting permission from Swami, the young men had prepared and come ready to Sai Kulwant Hall. They brought not only their musical instruments but also a collection of writing pens (that will be used by them in the examination) to be blessed by Swami. These young boys also wrote poems expressing their love and gratitude



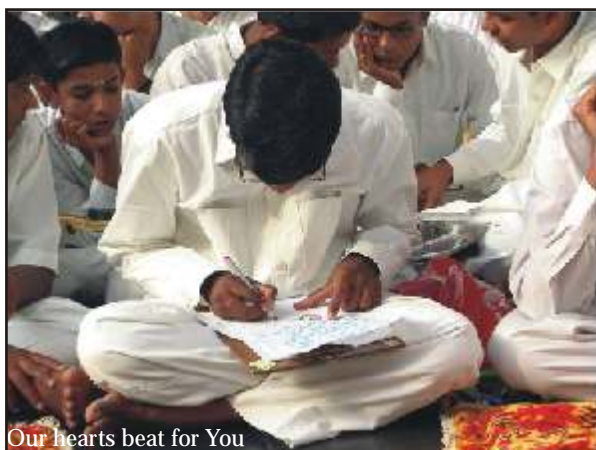
Tying a red ribbon

to Swami for the countless gifts and intense love that He had showered on them during their sojourn at His Lotus Feet during their entire schooling. They wrote this in beautiful calligraphy and tied a red ribbon around it, to make it presentable to Swami. Another young boy had handcrafted a violin that could be opened out to reveal his feeling for his Lord.

The normal time for Swami's arrival had come. Expectations were heightened. Last minute instructions were whispered. Throats were cleared. The tension was reminiscent of the start of the Kurukshetra war.

But no Swami yet. More time passed. Swami still had not come. But there, His car has just been spotted. He had gone to inspect the Sai Sreenivas Guest House, to ensure it was okay to receive the Prime Minister of the country who was due to visit the Ashram in a couple of days. The *Veda* Chanting started, a sure sign of His imminent arrival into Sai Kulwant Hall. But lo and behold. His car is not turning into Sai Kulwant Hall but going away - back to His residence, back to Poornachandra. The *Veda* chanting also stopped seeing the car turn away.

A deep silence pervaded the atmosphere. The disappointment was deep. Was Swami angry with us? Did we offend Him? Eyes were closed in deep heart felt prayer,



Our hearts beat for You

Seek Divine Grace for Success

expressing the intense longing of their young hearts to have Swami come and receive the bouquet of songs that they had composed and practiced for Him. The paper on which they wrote their poems of love to Him was unfurled. Hearts drawn in red ink were added to the text and perhaps a teardrop or two. But Swami, as only He knows, did not respond immediately. That evening, He came and went straight into the *mandir* hall and sat for *bhajan*, ignoring completely these young men waiting outside for Him on the verandah.

It was a long night of introspection. And intense prayer. And hard practice to perfect their rendition. And more prayer. For the only thing that can win the Lord's heart and secure His Grace is intense heartfelt prayer from deep within. As Ramakrishna once explained, "When you gasp for God with the same desperation as a drowning man gasps for air, only then will God reveal Himself".

The following day, a sacred silence hung easily on Sai Kulwant Hall. The hearts and minds were now one-pointed in their yearning for the Lord. Will He come and bless? Swami's car was approaching and the Lord was all smiles. He was happy in His success; that He was able to foster devotion and get these young

boys to think so intensely about Him. And now He was here to reward them for their efforts.

Coming to the verandah, He stood for a moment and looked very benevolently around at each and

start. And what followed was a real love feast, a divine romance, indescribable through mere words, but something that could only be experienced and tasted through being there.



Expressing their love for Him

The boys sang a song first expressing their love for Him. While the song was going on, another boy got up and gave Him a sheet of paper that had the lyrics written on it in beautiful calligraphy (red hearts included) so He could follow easily. Another boy then got up, while the song was still being sung and presented Him a red rose. At the conclusion of the song, yet another boy got up and recounted a stirring experience during his sojourn in the Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School. And so it went. Song followed by experience, followed by song and so on.

The tales were different, spoken in a babel of tongues (English, Hindi, Telugu, Kannada

everyone of the High School graduating class. He swayed for a moment, hands upturned in His characteristic manner listening to the resonant *Vedic* chants. He then gestured for the boys holding the tray of pens to come forward and blessed it - thus ensuring their success in the public examination!!

Now that this temporal business was taken care of, the real business could

etc), but the language of love was the same. All spoke of their love for Him and His Love for them. All expressed that though they were away from home they were never homesick, for He took care of them with the love of a thousand mothers. They spoke of how He encouraged them, ceaselessly looked after their welfare, and nourished them when they were sick or unhappy, understood their needs and really cared for them, as

Seek Divine Grace for Success



Pens to be blessed by the Lord

even their mothers could not.

Some were humorous. Some were poignant. Some were heartrending. But all were uplifting, for the speaker as well as everyone blessed to be there.

One boy spoke of his first grade class. Every day at *darshan*, Swami would ask the kids, "How many *idlis* did you eat today?". The answers were invariably one or two, for that is what these 6 year olds could manage. Swami's answer would be, "Why so less?" So one day this young boy decided that he would please Swami by eating four *idlis*. As you might imagine it was quite a feat. After the second one he was feeling full. The third one was all that he could muster and he was ready to be sick. He could not however bear to break his resolution as well as waste the fourth *idli* on his plate, so with great effort he managed to finish the fourth one and dragged himself and his bloated stomach to Sai Kulwant Hall for morning *darshan*. He was sure Swami would ask him how many *idlis* he ate and knowing that he had eaten four would make Swami happy. But Swami just went past him without even a glance. He was disappointed. What a waste of my hard work, he thought! After sometime Swami came near the boys and called for a few primary school kids to speak. As always, the boys came one after the

another and astounded the audience with their oratory skills. Suddenly, the boy saw Swami beckoning to him to speak. The boy started speaking in a feeble voice. Swami immediately said, "Boy! speak up, loud. Did you not eat four *idlis* today!". Yes, mother knows everything!

Another boy spoke in Telugu about how Swami cured him of an acute attack of eczema. He tried a number of medicines and



Singing His praise

treatments all in vain. Often, he would get up at night crying with pain. At times it was so severe that even sitting and standing was very painful and unbearable. The boy suffered thus for almost a month.

One day this boy celebrated his birthday by bringing a tray of goodies to Sai Kulwant Hall. Swami normally blesses these "birthday boys" and accepts their letters. Swami beckoned to all the birthday boys to come forward. This boy availed this opportunity to tell Swami about his ailment. In all concern Swami asked him,

"Since when have you been suffering?" "Who has been treating you?" "What actually happened?"

After giving a patient hearing to the boy's woes, Swami asked him full of motherly love and care, "Why didn't you tell me all these days?"

And then it happened. The Lord's Hands began to move in a circle and out poured the mother of all medicines, the Holy *Vibhuti* Ash. He gave it to the boy and assured him that everything would be all right.

The boy began to take the *Vibhuti* regularly. And the disease that had plagued the boy for 30 days just vanished within 3 days of taking the *vibhuti*.

This is just another testimony of His Benevolent Grace and Immense Love for all.

Another boy spoke about the saga of White (students) and Orange (Bhagavan), a saga of Divine Love. He narrated the experience of a boy who once told Swami, "Swami, I am willing to do anything for You. I am even ready to die for You!"

Bhagavan looked deep into the boy's eyes and said something that will linger in the hearts of all forever. He said, "I don't want you to die for me. I want you to live for Me". Such is the love the Lord has for His students



Presenting their poem to Him

Seek Divine Grace for Success

- His children and His property.

Swami was very happy with the students. Benevolently, He posed for group pictures with all the students. And then He stood and gazed lovingly at all of them for a long time.

And this love story went on and on. The following day it was the turn of the graduating undergraduate class of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. And then the postgraduate class. Soon it was the turn also of the graduating girls from

the High School.

This “ceremony” marks the rite of passage for a Sai student. While students in “advanced countries” celebrate their school leaving in what is called the High School prom, an expensive and rather licentious practice, the Sai student feels privileged if he could just sing for Him. Their expression of love and recounting of warm memories stirs devotional feelings not only in the students but also in all the staff and devotees present.

And so passed another day at the Lord's feet. It was another reminder that the true rite of passage is when you remember the Lord incessantly. When you remember that the only real purpose of life is to reach Him. And you can achieve everything if you just win His Grace. For He is all that matters. ■



Loving gaze on the students



Recounting their experiences with Sai



The coveted group photograph

Making Lives

Service by Sai Alumni

Some time ago, we published an article by Gene Massey about a *seva* camp run by our old students. In this article, I would like to briefly describe a different kind of *seva*, once again done by our old students. This *seva* is different because it is not a one-day affair like most service camps are; rather, it is a continuing and on-going affair. One of these days, we hope to have the



The kovalguttapalli village

leader of the group in our studio and interview him for Radio Sai; in the meanwhile, I could perhaps give a short and broad-brush overview of the wonderful work being done by these old students of Swami. Before I get on to the description, may be I ought to mention that the leader of this team, after graduation some years ago, decided not to seek a job as that would separate him from his mother, who though a working-lady needed help due to a physical handicap. Having decided to stay back to help his mother, this boy then started exploring possibilities to do some additional *seva* during his spare time, and thus were born the projects that I shall now briefly describe.

The *seva* activity was launched on 1st January, 2003, and the service group decided to focus on a small village named Kovalguttapalli. If you walk



Providing them with clean and healthy food
Volume 2 Issue 7

from the Planetarium towards the Sai Geetha shed, you will see a road turning to the left. That road leads to this village, which is on the bank of the Chitavathi river. There are about 150 families in the village and the main occupations are farming, milk vending, and labour service [as coolies].

The service group set itself three objects which it defines as follows:

- To understand the socio-economic and cultural aspects of village life, and to explore suitable means of improving the welfare and quality of life of the villagers.
- To focus the project so that they target self-sufficiency in food grains, drinking water, health, education, and economic sustenance.
- To render quality work, even while putting into practice the teachings of Swami.



Teaching the children

Wanting to do good is one thing and doing it the right way is entirely another. Often, service projects boomerang because of a wrong approach. Not many realise that though villagers are in general quite poor, they have their own sense of dignity. Understanding this, our old boys made a modest and fairly tactful entry. To start with, they just started paying periodic visits to the village and teaching the children there songs composed by Swami. Everyone here loves Swami, and thus the children were quite eager to learn Swami's songs. The parents too approved heartily of this assistance. The ice

had been broken.

Next step was to tell the children something more, about personal cleanliness, keeping the surroundings neat, prayer, respecting elders, and studying hard. By the way, I should mention that almost all the kids in the neighbouring areas attend Easwaramma School established by Swami many years ago. Once again,



Teaching the children

all this instruction went very well with the village elders; I mean who would complain if someone came along and taught kids how to be clean, study hard and be respectful to parents? An added attraction was that from time to time, the children were also given food. So, round two also was a success.

Having gained the confidence of the villagers and established their seriousness of purpose, it was now relatively easy for the old boys to start talking to the elders. It started with regular Bhajans, and soon, after the Bhajan session was over, the students started talking about Swami's teachings. What kind of teachings? Did they give scholarly lectures on *Advaitam* and stuff like that? Not at all! Being Swami's students, they know very well how to focus on the relevant, as Swami often had advised



Increasing their health awareness

Making Lives

Service by Sai Alumni

them to, when they were students. Thus, their talks were about how parents must save for the welfare of their family.

It is no use giving mere talks about saving money. Something concrete had to be done and a clear road map had to be presented. Thus was born the SARD or SAVE A RUPEE A



Tips on saving money

DAY scheme. Four Self-help Groups were formed, each with about 12 women members. Each group nominated two group coordinators, whose job it was to collect money at the end of every week, and deposit the same in a savings account in the local branch of the Vysya Bank. While the villagers were encouraged to do the money collection, all the required banking assistance was provided by the old boys, including in relation to making deposits and withdrawals. By the end of 30 weeks, the total savings stood at Rs. 30,000/- an impressive sum one must say.

It is not the women alone who received attention and assistance. The men engaged in farming were introduced to a cost-effective method of compost generation. To start with, the farmers were encouraged to regularly collect all



Making cotton wicks 2

easily bio-degradable matter found in the neighbourhood such as dry leaves, twigs, etc. All this was then dumped into special pits dug for the purpose of generating compost. Into these pits were now introduced earthworms of a special type, which were then allowed to multiply. At the end of about 40 days or so, the bio-degradable matter had been transformed by the earthworms into a rich, natural fertilizer. Not only had expenditure on chemical fertilizers been cut, but, more important, a better and more eco-friendly fertilizer had been produced instead. And the yield has gone up too.

Swami often quotes a Chinese proverb that says that it is better to teach a man how to fish than to feed him fish. In this spirit, the students now began to initiate new programs that would augment the family income. The first of these was to train the villagers to make cotton wicks. Now wicks are used regularly



Making cotton wicks 1

in Pujas at homes, and there is a good demand for cotton wicks. The students taught one and all to make the wicks, gave the villagers cotton and packaging material, and finally took the responsibility for the marketing. Sold under the brand name Deepam Cotton Wicks, the wicks are on sale in the shopping centre in Prashanti Nilayam, and believe it or not, the sale is around Rs. 10,000/- a month. Not bad, I would say. By the way, the money is not used up but saved in a bank so that it can grow.

The villagers are now quite enthusiastic and participate actively in all programs initiated by the old students, having thoroughly understood that whatever is being done is entirely for their own good. Thus, every alternate week, a day is set apart for village cleaning. It starts with the children going round doing *nagarsankeetan*, after which comes the



Vermin Compost made by the villagers

cleaning in which all participate. And when the cleaning programme is over, there is *aarathi*.

There is always room for more, and the old boys are now exploring the possibility of systematically cultivating a leguminous plant, that is known to grow wild in the region. The attractive point about this plant is that it grows easily in arid regions, and requires very little water. What is important is that the seed of the plant yields oil that can be used as fuel. And the oil cake that remains after the crushing for oil extraction is a very good fertilizer. Project studies are now under way.

This shows how methods of man-management and cost-effective production etc., studied in the Business School can come in handy



Weekly bhajans

Making Lives

Service by Sai Alumni



Social Service by the children

even in seemingly mundane village affairs! Let me end this heart-warming story with something that is really wonderful. Sometime ago, a farmer lost his cow suddenly. It was apparently healthy all along but mysteriously died and quite suddenly too. The veterinary doctor who was consulted when the cow became very sick was suspicious that it was all due to something that the cow had eaten. So, with the permission of the farmer, he did a post-mortem. What he saw shocked not only him but also all the curious villagers who had



Cleaning the village through self help

gathered around. The cow of the stomach was full of plastic bags that had been discarded as garbage by all and sundry. Promptly, our boys told the villagers, "It is time to get rid of the plastic bags, a major curse of modern times. We will teach you to make paper bags. This will save us



Nagarsankeerthan

from the horror of plastic bags, and incidentally also fetch some income."

And thus has come into existence another cottage industry. Our boys help in the collection of old newspapers, and the villagers are busy making paper bags. What about marketing? Will our boys leave the villagers in the lurch? No way, and using their contacts, they have now got the Boys' Hostel to abandon plastic bags and use paper bags exclusively in their Co-operative Stores. Thus, it is quite common to see our hostel boys move around with paper bags rather than plastic bags.

I do hope this new trend would spread like wild fire, because the plastic bag menace is assuming alarming proportions. You do not have to take my word for it. Just take a walk to the Chitravathi river and you would see tons and tons of plastic bags getting dumped there. Frankly, I do not have the heart to see this terrible sight any more. I mean this is the same river bed that was once the scene of extra-ordinary Divine *Leelas* of which you have had a glimpse in this issue. Is this to be the fate of the Divine Playground? Is this the way we should show respect to One whom we do not miss an opportunity to hail as the Lord?

You know what Jesus once said? He said, "Why call ye Me Lord, Lord, when thou does not follow what I say?" Our Lord says, revere the Earth. Is this the way to show reverence to Mother Earth? May be I should end with a Chinese proverb that says: If man ill-treats the Earth, the Earth in turn would punish him!"

I would very much like to hear your comments on what I have written. As usual, we can be reached at: h2h@radiosai.org



Dead cow with plastics in the stomach



The recovered plastics after post mortem



The paper bag designed by the students



Is this to be the plight of a sacred river

On Singing Bhajans

Dear Reader,

We at Heart to Heart have received some queries about the proper way of conducting bhajans. Some listeners ask,

- What is the standard format for conducting bhajans? With Ganesha always being first... does it really matter if the Guru bhajan is second... Or can the Mother bhajan be sung second?
- Should all bhajans be sung on one scale.... Or can the scale be changed with regard to the type of voice of the singer?
- Which one is more important in keeping the beat? Is it the instrument or the vocalist?

and so on.

We requested some of the senior students and faculty members who conduct bhajans at Prashanthi Nilayam to give us a reply. Here are 15 points given to us by them.



1. Regarding the format: What is more important is that we have bhajans on all Deities. Rama, Krishna, Shiva, Sarvadharm (Allah, Esu, Buddha, Zoroaster, Nanak), Mother, etc. Depending on the place and circumstances we can sing more on some particular name.

2. In Sai Samithis (Centres) they sing bhajans in a particular format. However at Prashanthi Nilayam, we do not have any particular order, except that there should be a mix of all names. Two bhajans on the same deity, i.e. two Krishna bhajans, or two Rama bhajans, or two Shiva bhajans should not occur consecutively.

3. We do have an order in terms of the type of bhajans, i.e. we sing bhajans which have a slow tempo only in the beginning if it is a half an hour or one hour session.

4. We are expected to sing as many Namavalis (bhajans containing only names of Gods) because they are easier to follow and they appeal to all.

5. Only those who have a good voice and are able to sing well should lead the bhajans. This is to ensure that the others will get concentration and divine feelings.

6. The more the number of people attending a session the more strict we must be on the choice of singers and instrumentalists. That is to say, in a very small gathering, like bhajans with family members etc., we can relax the rules on the selection of singers...

7. There must be considerable difference in the first and the second speed of any bhajan - double the speed if possible.

8. Clapping should be regular and single claps per cycle in the first speed. The second speed clapping could be twice per cycle.

9. Discipline of the singers is very important. They should not look around here and there, or talk during bhajans. Passing of mikes, if any, must be done so as not to disturb the others.

10. Apart from the raga (tune) and tala (beat), the singers must be aware and feel that they are singing only for pleasing GOD (thus sanctifying their own lives) and not for the others gathered there.

11. Singers must do regular practice and voice culture. They must sing only those bhajans with which they are fully confident and which the people around can easily follow. Depending on the following they must select known bhajans.

12. New bhajans must first be sung in smaller gatherings (or taught) so that the followers are familiar.

13. The scale of the bhajans should be chosen in accordance with the singer's voice. Of course one must keep in mind that the followers should be able to follow, too. Usually, all bhajans cannot be sung in the same scale. If instruments are there they help in choosing the right scale, or else the scale has to be related to the previous bhajan suitably.

14. Singers are no doubt very important and if they sing well and with pure feelings it will uplift all others. The instrumentalists must give good support and all in a spirit of dedication to the Lord.

15. There must not be any time delay between ending of a bhajan and the beginning of the next bhajan. If the instrument is giving the lead, it must do it immediately and the singer should start as soon as possible.

Please note that this article details the way bhajans are conducted at Prashanthi Nilayam. This is just for the general edification of our readers and in no way meant to force a particular format or a set of rules on anyone. In certain Sai Centres, certain rules and guidelines are laid down by their respective Sai Organizations, which should be followed. The main thing to be kept in mind is the very purpose of singing the bhajans - communion with the Divine.

Jai Sai Ram.

The Crossword Puzzle solved

S	A	D	H	A	N	A		S		S
	S			N			M	O	H	A
B	H	A	J	A	N		A			I
	R			N			Y		M	
	A			D	H	Y	A	N	A	
	M	A	T	A					N	
		M				J	Y	O	T	I
N	I	R	G	U	N	A			R	
A		I		P		N	A	M	A	M
R		T		A		M				
A	H	A	M		M	A	H	I	M	A

All clues with their answers and explanations

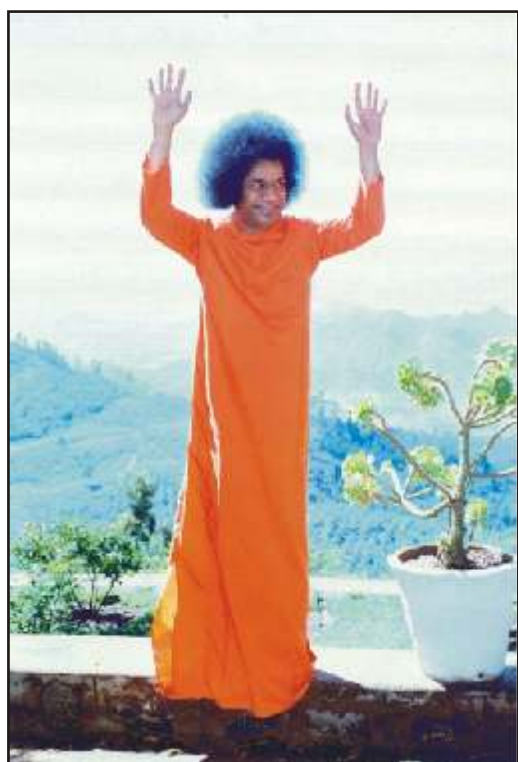
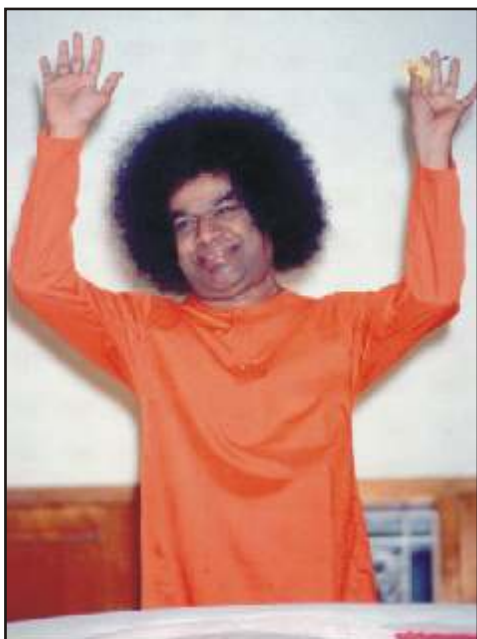
Across

- The wealth of the spiritual realm (7)
It's 'Sadhana', because 'dhana' means wealth and 'sadhana' or spiritual discipline is true wealth.
- Possessiveness leading to peril (4)
It's 'Moha' or too much attachment to worldly ties and possessions.
- Devotional singing in chorus (6)
It's 'Bhajan'.
- What do you do to train your mind to concentrate? (6)
It's 'Dhyana' or Meditation.
- The sect of the mother (4)
It's 'Mata' meaning mother. A sect is also called as 'Mat(th)a'.
- Inflame the flame divine (5)
It's 'Jyoti' meaning light or divine flame
- Formless, attributeless, the absolute (7)
It's 'Nirguna' or the absolute principle who is beyond any attributes.
- The divine name with a vermilion mark (5)
It's 'Namam' coz divine name is called 'nama' and a vermilion on the forehead of some hindus is called 'namam'.
- The deepest of spiritual truths embodied in one alphabet (4)
It's 'Ahm' which means 'I', one who has understood 'I' has understood spirituality.
- An expression, a manifestation of divine glory and grandeur (6)
It's 'Mahima'.

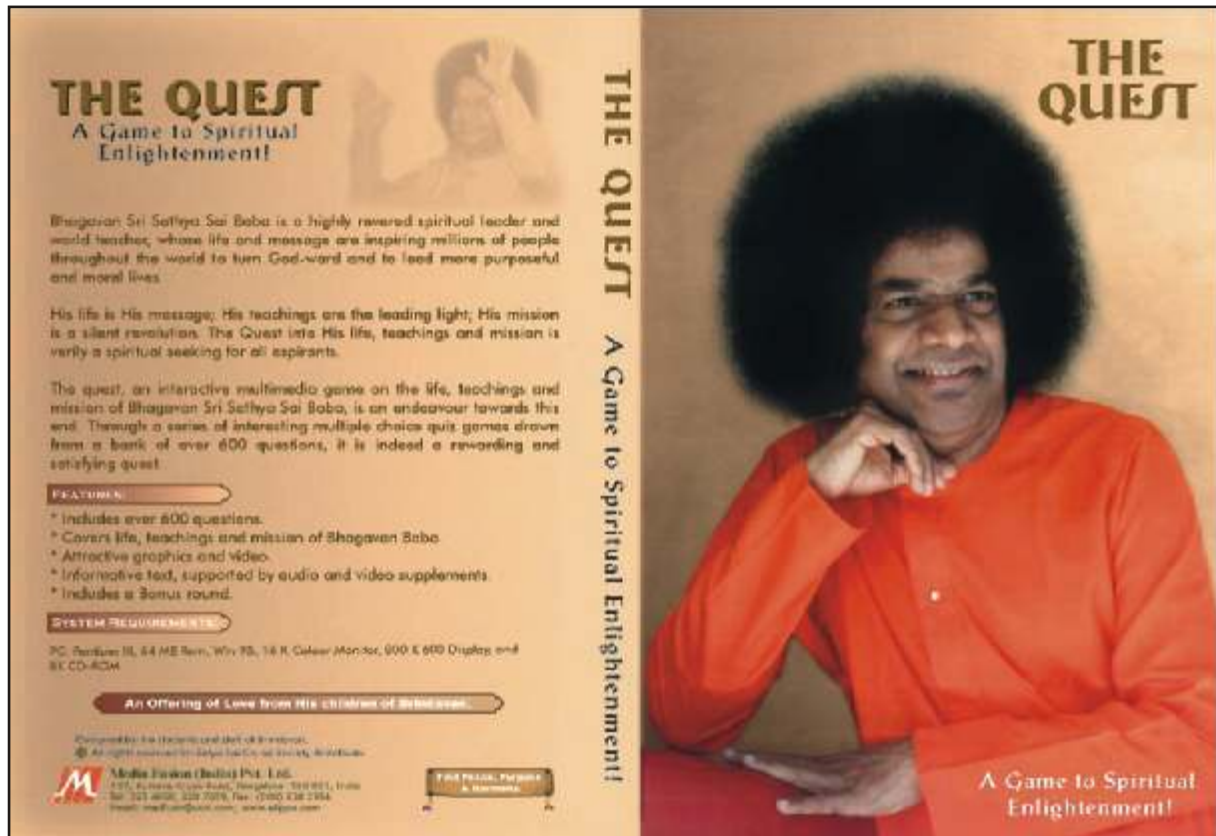
Down

- That veils the divine from the mortal (4)
It's 'Maya' or illusion.
- One full lifetime of the many (5)
It's 'Janma' or one birth. Hindus believe in the doctrine of rebirth.
- Not an animal, a human (4)
It's 'Nara' or a man.
- Where do spiritual aspirants converge? (6)
It's 'Ashram' or a spiritual retreat.
- Ambrosia celestial (6)
It's 'Amrita' or divine nectar.
- Joy, bliss, peace call it whatever u want cause u can't measure it (6)
It's 'Ananda' or eternal bliss.
- Near, not far; second, not first (3)
It's 'Upa' meaning near or second.
- With this prefix, originated Ma cow (2)
It's 'Gomata' or the cow referred to as 'mother cow' in Hindu tradition. 'Go' refers to cow and 'mata' means 'mother'.
- Mystic formulae formulated to illumine the mind (6)
It's 'Mantra' or word/group of words composed for spiritual enlightenment.
- Divine Mother (3)
It's 'Sai' because 'Sai' is made up of 'Sa' which means divine and 'aaye' meaning mother.

Why fear when I Am Here.....



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The role of faith comes from you - the reward of fulfillment will only come from me! The effort & dedication will come from you - the strength will only come from me! The promise of devotion will come from you - the nectar of love will only come from me! Yes! The true devotee surrenders his life to me & with his love & humility, holds my life within him. He worships to attain my love & I worship his love for mine. The end will come, where the identity will break - the love will merge & only the purest devotion will live!

– Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba



Love All Serve All