

HEART TO HEART
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Between You and Us

Dear Reader,

This is the age of convergence. We live in an age where the traditional boundaries between disciplines, technologies and sectors are being erased. The Internet is one great example of this convergence. Though the effects of convergence are visible mainly in the way people communicate and share information, we at Heart2Heart believe that this is only a nascent effect of a much larger and divine force at work. This force is slowly, but surely, erasing all the artificial barriers that man has unintentionally created in his mind. And that includes the great barriers between science, business and spirituality.

An increasing number of people, who hitherto viewed spirituality and the so called 'affairs of the world' as mutually exclusive are now realizing that spirituality is merely changing the attitude with which you conduct the affairs of the world! Being a businessman cannot stop you from being spiritual! Being a scientist cannot stop you from being spiritual! And being spiritual does not mean you that you cannot be a successful scientist or businessman!

This Issue is a testimony to this concept of convergence. The Cover Story is on Mr. Sinclair, a successful businessman from the United States and a long time devotee of Swami. He firmly believes that the 'Business of business and the business of life are one and the same'. There is yet another story in the Feature Articles called '*Einstein and Baba*'. Einstein, perhaps the greatest scientist humanity has ever produced, was a deeply spiritual person. Just note what he says:

"A human being is a part of the whole, called by us "Universe," a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest: a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. Nobody is able to achieve this completely, but the striving for such achievement is in itself a part of the liberation and a foundation for inner security."

Great men like this are harbingers of a true and complete convergence of life with all its diversity. And **True Convergence** is realizing the oneness of everything in this Universe. This **Unity**, as Swami says, is the pathway to **Divinity**.

Happy reading!

In Sai Service,
SGH Team.

Sathya Sai Speaks - Loving the Divine

People determine the nature of the Divine, through the categories of logic and dialectics. But, intellect cannot grasp it; reason cannot delve into it. For, both are shaped by one's prejudices and predispositions. We appreciate only what we like; we see only what we would like to see. "When prayer is answered and one gets what one desires, God is real; when they are not answered, God is a fake, a figment of the imagination." Arjuna acclaimed Krishna as the Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient God, when the foe was defeated, day after day. But, when his son Abhimanyu was killed in the conflict, he raved in his grief that Krishna had not guided him properly and guarded him efficiently. His mind wavered with every wind of fortune. To many, the mind is the master of the intellect also. One must be vigilant, and preserve the impartiality of the instrument called Reason or Intellect. Clarify Reason; then, it will reveal God everywhere, even in you. Once you accept God as the core of the Universe and yourself, have that faith strong and steady.

When one chooses a life-partner nowadays, the first consideration is paid to external beauty and charm. Next, the economic position is taken as the basis. How rich is he or she? How much does he or she earn? Questions like, 'How far are they educated?' 'What is the social status of the families to which they belong?', are asked later. Carried off by mere external frills, people enter into wedlock, and get entangled in misery or a destructive family life. The family cannot be stable if it is built on such slender foundation. Prime importance has to be paid to the fundamental requisites of a good character, high ideals of tolerance and forbearance, love and service. When beauty fades or wealth wanes, the bond too becomes less strong.

It is the same with the God whom you choose, adore and yearn to live with. You should not choose God for the benefits He can shower on you. Do not expect God to satisfy your worldly or material ambitions; and, when they are not realised, do not desert the Path towards God. "Baba! Appear in my dream this night!" you demand, and, if it does not happen, He is not Sai Baba, he is *Rai* Baba (Stone Baba); and, you go in search of some other God who will be at your beck and call. You must hold on to your faith, whatever might happen, success or failure, appointment or disappointment. When God who is your very core is irremovably fixed in your consciousness, there will be no room for elation or dejection. God is bliss, and when God is the undying spring in you, you will ever have Bliss.

- **Baba**

Conversations with Sai - Part 6 **(Continued from the previous Issue)**

A Visitor: Swami, one hears talk of *Mantras*.

SAI: Just the repetition of a *Mantra* is of no value, but if the *Mantra* is chanted with full knowledge of its significance, it has a great effect.

A Visitor: How can we improve memory?

SAI: There is not much use thinking about the past, because it is gone. Trying to memorize is not of much value. We will naturally remember that in which we are interested. A small story: Arjuna was 85 years old, a middle aged man. In those days people lived much longer. Arjuna said, 'Lord, how is it that you can remember all the past lives, and I cannot?' Krishna replied, 'Well, what were you doing ten years ago on the third day of the month?' Arjuna said 'I do not know.' Then Krishna said, 'Well, you were alive then.' Arjuna replied, 'Yes, I was alive.' Krishna then said, 'Look back Arjuna, 60 years to the day you were married, do you remember that?' 'Oh, yes,' replied Arjuna, 'I remember that'. 'Then, look further back, Arjuna, to the day you met your *Guru* and were taught the martial arts. Do you remember?' 'Yes', replied Arjuna, 'I remember.' Then Krishna said, 'It is obvious that people remember that in which they are interested, that which was sufficiently intense to cause them to remember the incident. But they do not bother remembering that in which they are not intensely interested. Now, you do not remember 20 years back, but you know you were alive then, therefore the memory is there, but you cannot recall it. Now, I remember everything, Arjuna, because I am interested in everything.'

A Visitor: (*carrying a professional camera*): Can I take Your picture now?

SAI: (*in English*): How many are here? Two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.....twelve.

A Visitor: Twelve disciples.

SAI: This is my camera (*Swami opens His hand and there are 12 small pictures of Himself amid much exclamation from the group*). Keep them in your purse. See, twelve! Full address also! Address here in India. No camera, no film, no flash. A visiting card. Puttaparthi is the address. (*Sai opens a silver box and starts preparing leaves*).

Visitor: What is that?

SAI: (*in English*) That is the nut. This is the leaf. See, the leaves, and this is the betel. This is not a bad habit. If it were a bad habit, Swami would not chew it. The leaf's juice purifies the blood. The nut digests. Here, they mix the nut and give it for digestion even with the little puppies. And the other thing that is put in is calcium. The three mixed make red colour. This is Indian. (*The foregoing was said in a joking voice, accompanied with much merriment from the foreign visitors*).

A Visitor: The pictures that people take of Swami and then produce for sale are not good pictures. They do not do justice to Swami. Swami is perfect and everything around Him should be perfect.

SAI: Some may like one thing and others may not like that thing. The liking and the disliking is not in the object, but in our minds. If a person judges just from appearance, then it indicates a lack of depth. First they should know Swami, and then make a judgment.

A Visitor: But Swami is beautiful and the pictures make Him ugly.

SAI: Love is the beauty.

Translator: Swami says that because we love Him we see the beauty. So whoever wants to come will come to Him. You need not get upset because of pictures.

SAI: Johnson, you know Johnson the English writer and scholar. He had an ugly wife, but he loved her very much. A friend said, 'Your wife looks old and made up'. She did not look young and beautiful. Friends thought she looked old and made up. But he thought her beautiful. Love is blind.

A Visitor: How does one get devotion to God?

SAI: Confidence is necessary. Food is the origin - the body is made from food. Without health, it is very hard to do anything. The stomach is of four parts: one quarter air, one quarter food, and one half water. Too much food is taken nowadays; there is no room for water. In India, rice and wheat are standard. They are all right if taken in moderation. But people eat too much and become dull. Too much food results in dullness of mind. Food in moderation does not result in sickness. Swami travels to various parts of India and does not get sick from food. Swami becomes sick only when taking on the sickness of a devotee. Otherwise, never. Too much milk is bad. It is *Rajasic*.

Visitor: Sai Baba, this is for me, this is not for anybody, just for myself - my food. Meat is important, meat is my food.

SAI: Food is important for the body. Food is the reason even for being born. Mother and father have been nourished with food and then give birth to a child. The parents have grown up on food. The whole body is a food bundle. The type of food you eat creates the kind of thought that will come to your mind. There will be a *Sattwic* effect if you have *Sattwic* food such as fruit and milk everything that is cool and not hot like strong onions. Meat gives the blood an effect, like passion and similar qualities. Dirty thoughts come with fish. Although fish is always in water, it has a bad smell.

A Visitor: How about lamb?

SAI: Meat is all right for those who concentrate on the body and want to have strength, but for spiritual aspirants it is not good.

A Visitor: But the proteins that come from meat?

SAI: Yes, the body will get proteins with meat, but mental proteins will not be there. If you are keen on a spiritual life, eating meat is not worthwhile; but if you are keen on worldly life, it is alright. There is another spiritual reason. When you kill an animal you give it suffering, pain and harm. God is in every creature, so how can you give such pain? Sometimes when someone beats a dog he cries, he feels so much pain. How much more pain then occurs in killing. Animals did not come for the purpose of supplying food to human beings. They came to work out their own life in the world. When a human being is dead, the foxes and other animals may eat the body, but we have not come to provide food for those that eat the human body; we have not come for that purpose. Similarly, man eats the animal, but the animal has not come to provide man with food. But, we have taken to eating meat as a habit.

A Visitor: But we take milk, which is animal.

SAI: Anything that comes from the cow, a little milk, butter, cheese, is alright for the spiritual aspirant. There is no harm to the cow, and it is of benefit to take it. In *Dwapara Yuga*, before *Kali Yuga*, 5680 years back, milk came into favour. Eleven thousand years is the full length of the *Kali Yuga*.

(To be continued)

Chinna Katha - All Is Divine

ALL is divine. When we are firmly established in the truth of our divinity, we will directly realise that others too are Divine. Compassion for others is felt as long as we do not consider ourselves as separate entities. There is a story to illustrate this truth.

A certain lady prepared some sweets for Shirdi Sai Baba. Somehow it so happened that a dog entered the house and ate them. The lady beat the dog with a stick and drove it away. Once again she prepared a plate of sweets and carried them to Baba. Baba refused them saying that He had eaten them and that His hunger had been appeased. The lady said that this was not possible because she had brought the sweets for the first time. Baba said, "No, I ate the sweets you prepared. I was beaten with a stick and driven away by you." The lady wondered for a while what Baba meant and then suddenly remembered how the dog had entered her house and eaten the sweets and was beaten by her. In this way Shirdi Baba made His devotees understand that He was not confined only to His physical form but is the indweller of all living beings.

-BABA

How Swami Came to Me

James Sinclair

Mr. James D. Sinclair is a reputed businessman, who has made a very big mark for himself in the field of mineral prospecting. That apart, he is also a person who has been coming to Bhagavan for spiritual guidance for several years for now. After having acquired his degree from the University of Pennsylvania, Wharton School of Business, Mr. Sinclair, in the year 1975, set up the Sinclair group of companies for which he became the President and the Chief Executive Officer. Thereafter, he established, in the year 1981, the James D. Sinclair Financial Research Institute, for which he became the Chairman and the Chief Executive Officer. Later on his interest increased in the field of television and telecommunications, wherein he became the founding partner of the company Cross Country Cable TV. Presently, he is the Chairman and the Executive Officer of the Tanzanian American Development Corporation. The manner in which James Sinclair of America became a devotee of Sai makes a thrilling story. Sinclair had never heard of Baba but he had a deep yearning for God in his heart; that was enough. For the rest of the story, we turn to Sinclair himself:

"How is it possible", I used to wonder, "that I was born at this time and age?" As a Christian, it seemed so unfair that here I was in the 1950's, and Jesus was on this planet two thousand years ago. I used to pray as I drove to New York City for business work: "I know you are out there, but I can't find you, Dear Lord. Instead, *You* must find me!" Those prayers were not wasted. They were heard and answered in the positive.

I will tell you of an event that at that time seemed shocking but would take thirty years to become fully clear. It has to be kept in mind that neither I nor my wife at that time had any understanding or inclination towards Eastern tradition or philosophies. In 1964, just a short while after our marriage, my wife and I accepted an invitation to stay at a friend's woodland cottage. As we were going to sleep, I saw an old man standing over my bed in the moonlight. My feeling was not one of fear but rather like one has while a mother is looking at her son. The old man then turned and walked across the room and through the wall! Just then, my wife said in a loud voice, "Jim, are you awake?" She screamed since she was watching the old man as he walked through the wall. Barbara had never seen anything like that in her life and was shaken by the experience. Now let us leave this experience and move ahead to 1968.

Our married life had produced our first daughter. Business was not going well. My health was not so good. The IRS [Internal Revenue Service, which is the name for the Income Tax Department in the U.S.] was looking for me. I had just sold my car to pay the month's rent for our living quarters. I was frustrated about the way things were going and my apparent inability to change the circumstances. One day, it just became too much for me to bear. I went into my cellar where I had a desk. I sat down and prayed:

*I don't know who You are.
I don't know where You are.
I don't know what You are.
But this I do know: You are!
So, You have to take over,
Because I have made a mess of everything.*

I resolved not to leave the cellar till the Divine literally took over, whatever that meant. All of a sudden, I looked to my right and saw what appeared to be a little royal child dressed in gold and jewels. The child had long hair, so I thought it must be a girl. Suddenly, all my fear was gone. I was totally at ease. I got up and went upstairs. The fun was about to begin.

I began to meditate twice a day. The environment slowly began to improve. I had an interesting experience. My meditation was on the light from a candle. Every time I started my meditation looking at the candle flame, I saw a little fellow in the flame wearing an orange robe with a great shock of black hair. Then I would transcend thought. I also began to have the same dream every single night. It went on for years. I saw myself walking up a hill, led by three men in the darkness of night. One was an old man in white. One looked somewhat like Jesus Christ. The one in the middle had an orange robe. This dream occurred night after night for years. At that time, I had no knowledge of Shirdi Sai Baba or Sathya Sai Baba. For that matter I had no idea of any *Avatar* and did not know what the word meant.

Now we move ahead another eighteen years to 1984. I have been meditating now for fifteen years. I am a vegetarian, and I keep a special room in my house for my meditation. It is a tiny hut, completely private. My meditation has lost form of any kind. A friend who then was a technical commodity market analyst knew my interest in meditation. He suggested that I might like the tape he has. He told me that he it played before and after his meditation. It gave him a great spiritual feeling. I was most grateful and began the same practice for relaxation before and after meditation. Wow! It was powerful.

Now comes the spectacular story. Please understand that I don't feel special in any way. In fact, I believe that someone had been knocking hard on my door for a lifetime. I was too stupid to know. Therefore, this person had to blow a bugle in my ear to get my attention. Well, the bugle blew in Connecticut, East Coast USA, one winter evening.

I was walking from the lavatory in the night. You know how you get a feeling someone is there. I did. I turned around and there He was. I hadn't the slightest idea who He was. This handsome figure dressed in a long orange robe, with a shock of hair you wouldn't believe, was in my hallway, looking at me silently. I nearly jumped out of my skin. As fast I had seen Him, He was gone. Well, it happened a second time. Not too much later, I was in my meditation room, and this same figure was standing when I came out of meditation. I rubbed my eyes. He was still there. He motioned as if I was to do something with His Feet. I knelt down and touched His Feet. As I looked up, He was no longer there. This time I didn't feel scared, I felt out of my mind. I didn't know which I needed more, spiritual or professional medical help! I was determined to find out who this fellow was that visited me. I certainly wasn't going to tell my wife.

Off I went to the fort of spiritual knowledge in New York City, Samuel Weiser's bookstore. I approached the clerk. He asked if he could help me. I said, 'I certainly hope so.' I described my visitor, of course without giving details of the visit. I wanted to know if there was any book about someone who looked like the description of my visitor. He said, 'One moment. I will be right back.' He returned and handed a packet of whitish grey powder and a book titled *Holy Man and the Psychiatrist* written by a doctor [this book is by Dr. Sandweiss]. The salesman told me that he himself was a devotee of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Now I knew that the name of the form was Sathya Sai Baba. Was I in for a surprise when I recognised that the recurring dream had been of Shirdi Sai, Sathya Sai, and Prema Sai walking up the hill night after night for many years? The figure in the flame was also Him.

On my first visit to Prashanti Nilayam, which is a story in itself, I was granted an Interview with Baba. As I entered the room, He said, "**All I have given you, and you have never been happy one moment in your life. I CAME TO YOU TWICE. Would you do something for Swami?**" My answer was, of course, yes.

Swami went on, "**BE HAPPY**". I had told absolutely no one at that time of the visit. In a 1994 Interview, Swami said to my wife and myself, "**I came to you thirty years ago**". He said it right out of the blue. 1964 was the year when we had the experience in the woodland cabin with the figure of the old man in white. That was indeed thirty years ago.

Who was the royal little girl in my cellar when I was at my wits ends? I believe it was Baba in the form of Baby Krishna, welcoming me as a spiritual baby onto His path. Thank You, Swami!

Watch and Be Happy!

James Sinclair speaks to Radio Sai on how Swami transformed his life

Excerpts from the Radio Sai Interview with Mr. James Sinclair (JS)
by Prof. Venkataraman (GV) in October 2004

GV: Sai Ram, dear listeners. Greetings from Prashanti Nilayam. Today, we have the pleasure of having with us in our studios Mr. James Sinclair. He is by disposition and choice a very silent person. The depth of his silence is the measure of his devotion to Bhagavan. I have a very deep personal regard for him. Firstly, I want to know how we should really be devoted to Bhagavan in an intense manner and yet still be immersed in the activities of the world? Then I would ask you to tell us something about how you came to Swami?

JS: Let me start at the beginning of the first question and work into the way not how I found Sai, but rather how Sai found me. The business of business and the business of life are one and the same - and to bring the infinite possibility out of any individual is extremely simple. It is the understanding 1) that the infinite possibility exists within you and 2) discovering a way in which that infinite possibility can emerge.

Now as to how Sai found me. As a young man I used to pray on my rosary beads. I felt very cheated. How in the world could I be so cheated that Christ lived 2000 years ago and here I am feeling lost and praying on my rosary beads? I had this feeling 'I don't know where You are, I don't know who You are, but I know You are... and I can't find You - so You better find me.' My prayers were answered.

I had many experiences; the most dramatic was actually seeing Swami in my home in Connecticut. After having seen Swami a second time in my meditation room - and this time Swami allowed me to touch Him, He was as real as you are sitting across the table - I was now on a mission to find who He was, not even knowing His name.

GV: How many years were there between your praying on the rosary and seeing Swami?

JS: Well, the prayers were in the 50s and seeing Him came 30 years later.

GV: 30 years later! And you were praying all these 30 years?

JS: I was. To find God; to find what life is about.

GV: The second time you actually touched him.

JS: He made a motion for me to touch His Feet. Then I began to try and find out who this individual was. I went to a spiritual bookstore and asked the attendant by describing what this person looked like. He said, "One moment" and returned with a book 'The Holy Man and the Psychiatrist' by Samuel Sandweiss, with a bag of *Vibhuthi* and told me that he was a devotee of Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Eventually I found my way to India in 1985 - and that was the beginning. **Because what I have learned here is not intellectual - what I have learned here is quietude. What I have learned is**

from the glances in His eyes, from simply breathing the same air, from being in proximity and finding out that His life is in fact is His Message. Recognizing that there is nothing to do except cease stopping something wonderful from happening. Knowing without a doubt that the business of life and the business of business and the business of family and the business of time are all the same.

GV: How did you learn all this?

JS: When He looks into your eyes, this process begins. When He touches you physically, when He speaks to you, when He takes a letter from you, when He walks close to you, something begins to happen.

GV: Can I say that unless the individual is properly prepared, he will miss this experience?

JS: But Swami gives very simple instructions for that preparation.

GV: What are they?

JS: 'Watch' and 'Be Happy'. In fact this is so simple that it must be Divine, because humans make things complex. When Swami says 'Watch', I take it literally. That's why He gives gifts of watches. **Because it is a living instruction of observation - to stand back and simply WATCH - Words, Actions, Thoughts, Character, Heart.** All the aspects of humanity.

Then He says, 'Be Happy'; which He defines as Unity with Divinity. The word 'Be' means 'is' ness. **So if one would simply WATCH, then something would occur that would result in Unity with Divinity.**

GV: OK. It is easy for individuals to be happy when there is success. But what happens when there is failure. How is one to be happy?

JS: Well, failure can be an opportunity. When you have a problem, don't you pray? Don't you hang on to the Feet of the Lord? So if a person wants to have a more even life, then would it not make a great deal of sense to hang on to His Feet when things are good? Because then the purpose of fear, the purpose of lack, the purpose of pain, the purpose of separation becomes less necessary in the human experience which only has one purpose. **The purpose of humanity is union with divinity**, according to Baba. The message is extraordinarily simple.

I am very much involved in business. But I firmly believe that success in the business environment is not a product of what you do but a product of what you are - and a product of what you are is a product of WATCH and Be Happy. I believe in treating my employees like a family. But even a father has a duty at times to be stern, to make decisions, to make corrections. So if one was to reward production and punish non-production, wouldn't he be a good father? **The business of business and the business of life are one.** Success has nothing to do with how you strategize. Success is like air. It is abundant. You can breathe it in. I don't believe in recessions and depressions - unless they are in your mind. Because if you approach life in the manner of instructions you receive here (from Swami), in their absolute simplicity, then I firmly believe that every listener will reach the highest possible destiny.

GV: Many people have suffered tragedies. Supposing an unforeseen tragic event befalls a devotee - at that time his faith is shaken.

JS: I also firmly believe in my life that every single event is a gift. Some of it hurts terribly, some of it is pleasing; but every single event in my life to this point - and I have had some shocking events - has done nothing to me, but **has done something for me.**

GV: But what would that person do?

JS: That person has an opportunity that he can either succeed or fail in - **and the opportunity is to recognize that divinity knows better than humanity and divinity never hurts.** Swami draws you here when you most need it and carries you through every single event, be it tragedy or success. **I have not had a tragedy in my life because I know that Divinity knows a lot better than I know and so I don't judge events.**

I have experienced tragedy even recently and let me tell you it is all good. Now the body will fall down and tears will come to the eyes and there will be even moments of not knowing left from right. But there is a quietude deep down inside that if you can hold onto even in the worst of times - it will become the best of times. It will be an opportunity to grow, an opportunity in strength. In tragedies that I have had, I've lost nothing but I've gained everything because in the silence of His eyes, His life is His Message. Inside you grows a silence that will rise to the circumstances as long as you cease stopping it from happening.

Watch. Don't participate in the thought. Be in the now. Don't fool around with the past. We have heard that in His discourse two days ago. Past is past. The future is not our business. Our business is now. And in the now - only 'Watch'. That's the gift that's here. That's the gift you can leave with. Don't try to intellectualize it. Don't take it apart in little bits and pieces. Feel it. Know it. Marry it. Be it. Worship it. But don't try to understand it. Because understanding is what blocks and stops. A gift is being handed to you. Don't argue with the gift. Don't try and make Swami teach some fact or word, *Mantra* or *Yagna*, prayer or exercise, diet or whatever. Just keep quiet.

When I come here, I don't have any questions - because who am I to speak to Him. I am open to the opportunity of an interview, the opportunity to hand over a letter or the simple opportunity of eye contact or simply seeing Him. **I come here because my best friend is here and if I can't understand anything else about Swami I do know He is my best friend, who has my interest at heart and He knows what my interest is.** In gratitude for that why not simply follow the instructions given, going back to the basics of WATCH, 'Be happy', and 'Do good'.

In the beginning you just look - why should a thought be in your mind without your permission? And if you can't get rid of the thought that is less than what would be expected of you, you certainly have the great ability as a human to only think about one thing at a time. So you could pick some wonderful time in your life. You might pray. If you can do neither, maybe you should clean something or do some work. But don't dwell on a thought you didn't invite. So watch your thoughts.

Character. How are you acting towards another person? Has it ever occurred to you that you might make amends for the things you have done to hurt others during your life, as we all have?

Your Heart. Are you feeling compassion? Do you really understand how horrible it is that nations are at war? That families all over the world have tragedies each time a soldier falls or a civilian falls.

GV: I have reflected a lot on the horrors of today's society and I feel convinced that Swami's Message is the only answer. And yet somehow the world seems to be not ready for it. Why do you think it is so? Why is man unable to rise above his negative characteristics?

JS: Because man doesn't want to.

GV: What is the attraction for him to be in the gutter?

JS: The attraction of the gutter is excitement, power and greed. So in the world today, in every individual, there is both good and its opposite. It is up to the individual as to which of those two entities will rule the day.

GV: Sir, you are a businessman and I presume a successful and wealthy one. How does one be a successful businessman and not allow wealth to cling to him?

JS: The madness is if a person worth 200 million US dollars, loses 1 Million, you have to take him to the hospital and give him oxygen. It is very simple. **Give it away. And if you do, you remain vibrant.** Because you are always young, because you have to make it again. My wife was recently deceased and gave her children their inheritance in their lifetime. That's the trick. I don't have material needs. I do my business because Swami told me to do the business. It is not my business. It is His business and He is not the body we see. **But I do have a duty to perform, the results of which are not in my hands - but the work is.**

Swami is kind enough, divinity is kind enough, that I actually like what I do. **So I play a game. But how that game works out is not up to me.** But what is up to me is to do the most excellent possible job, to treat everyone that I deal with with the highest possible ethic, to discipline wrong doing and to fight evil wherever I see it. And evil is very clear - it is hurting others. So I simply try not to harm. I don't live by commandments - I live by a code and the code can be gleaned by simply listening to Discourses.

GV: You mentioned the word 'Divine' many times. What does Divinity mean to you?

JS: Divinity to me is the word I use in place of the word God, because I don't think the human language approaches what's there. I can only tell you that Swami once said to me "I will give you a glimpse of Swami". Now I can't explain what that is. But I can tell you that He doesn't lie. When He says He is going to do something, He does it. And that glimpse is not something that I can explain to you. But I can tell you firmly, only by comparison to something else, that it is beyond the word God. So, Divine to me means non-conceptual. God is the highest possible thought of the conceptual human being and nothing compared to what's out there - the power, the magnificence and the totality.

I learn more from the silence between Swami's words than I learn from words. When I listen to Swami, I try and stay empty. Because very few people understand what the word listen means. Listen means mentally shut up. You can't listen if you are thinking about what you are going to say because you are not listening. So the practice of listening is really something that develops by contemplation and meditation. By slowing down thoughts, by relaxation of the mind, then something starts to happen.

In the sense of Swami as light, this light shines through so brightly that even being near, being willing to listen, to be open, to receive, not to argue, not to try and understand, not to try and be a devotee, just be open, then something starts to happen.

So, I believe Swami starts a process that moves as if it was almost automatic and business does not interfere with that. Business is simply life. If business becomes your divinity, then you are going to become very much like what you see in the world and what bothers you - driven by greed and avarice - but that is stupidity. Because I don't need to take anything from you to receive. It is everywhere. All I need to do, is do whatever my duty is well and it is like a magnet.

GV: Do you feel there is any difficulty in your being a good Christian and yet having perfect faith in Swami?

JS: No. I don't find any difficulty in that at all. Because if one would only look at the teachings of Jesus Christ and compare them with the teachings of Swami, and recognize that there are many roads but they all lead to the same destination, how could there be any contradiction when the message is Love? So, I find no problem whatsoever. But if you were to ask me if I was a religious man, I tell you that I seek to be totally open, totally silent, able to listen and I don't find that in any ritual or practice.

GV: Swami says rituals are a stepping stone towards higher realization and when rituals fall apart, wither away and you are left alone with your consciousness and face to face with God, you become a witness.

JS: We as humans tend to fantasize about 'realization', 'enlightenment' and 'witness'. This is not something we do, but something that happens naturally, as if we were a dissolving pill that is put in a glass and effervesces by itself. So I suspect that a lot of the effort tends to get in the way. A lot of the silence that develops within an individual, if they don't resist it, opens and may be the way. That's what I find here. That's why I make the pilgrimage and that's why if I have the ability to hear Swami's words, then I assure you that I will do nothing else but that.

And Swami doesn't speak in poetry. Although a lot of us tend to look into the deeper and more complex meanings. His message is absolutely simple, absolutely straightforward and never to cause us pain or suffering, but only to prevent pain and suffering. If they do occur - as they do in everyone's life - accept, because what other choice do you have? Leaning emotionally against an event, is like running your head at a stone wall at 200 miles an hour. Not practical in the least - what can I do to make something undone, I can't.

But understand that in life there are no second chances. So tell the people you love, that you love them. Not by words necessarily, although that is nice, but by thoughts, by actions, because you may not get a second chance. Treat people equally and treat all people as if they were your family.

GV: Supposing somebody who has never heard of Swami were to ask you 'Who is Sai Baba', what would you say?

JS: Ask Him (Swami). Our job, if anything, is only to welcome those Swami calls. **But how can I explain to some other person what Swami is when I don't have the slightest idea. Nor does anyone else for that matter. If I was to write a book on everything I knew about Swami, it would be 1000 blank pages. Because I can only listen.** So, the answer is simple. If you are interested in who and what Swami is - there is a plane. Go, taste and see. The only job that we

would have, and I am not sure there is any job, would be to be welcoming and assist the person who wants to find Swami. Swami doesn't need us for anything.

Who in the history of all the *Avatars* ever took such a deep interest in the little lives that we live. Here's Divinity walking among us, comforting us, guiding us, teaching us and finally saying "**There is no difference between you and I, except one - I know who I am and you are going to find out who you are**". This is something that is so real, so ethical, so upfront that if you simply accept what is standing in front of your eyes, you have everything to gain and absolutely nothing to lose.

GV: Once Swami revealed a great secret and said that God does not need anything because everything is already His. God incarnates so that people will start to remember Him. When God comes in human form, people offer Him many things; He doesn't need anything, but allows you to offer them for your own benefit.

JS: **He comes and gives us everything we need until we get to the point of the openness - to accept what He has come to give us.** He gives us comfort from disappointment, shock or tragedy - He carries us through these. But it is up to us to simply accept. I can't save the world. The world does not want to be saved. But I certainly can cease harming. I can certainly shut up and listen.

GV: The way I have disciplined myself is to say 'If I start thinking I will have pain and pleasure. If I stop thinking, but feel in the heart, there is no pain, there is no pleasure, there is only quiet and happiness'.

JS: Then you have found whatever Divinity is and you should simply allow that to grow.

GV: That's the point. We should make it last. Not just come in fits and starts.

JS: The fits and starts are the thoughts. The silence is the reality. We believe in the unreal and we don't have faith in the real. If we simply turn that around a bit and have not 'faith in Swami' but seek 'the faith **of** Swami', then the infinite possibility that we all are, will emerge in whatever way it should.

GV: You said faith 'in' Swami and faith 'of' Swami - how do you make the distinction?

JS: The faith 'in' Swami is the belief that Swami will do something for us. **The faith 'of' Swami is recognition that 'I am divine'.**

GV: Before we sign off what are your final words to our listeners?

JS: That everything I have said is probably wrong.

GV: (laughs) I doubt that very much.

JS: Everything that can be conceptualized lies within human experience and its ignorance. Therefore less words, more silence - less looking and more acceptance.

GV: Silence of the mind.

JS: Silence of the mind can start with the silence of the mouth. Do what you can do. It is not what goes in the mouth that creates something. It is what comes out of it. Simply start by watching your words. Start somewhere, start wherever you are and let the rest take care of itself. In business, in life, in what you may call religion, in what you may call spirituality, don't waste whole lots of time seeking to change yourself. I am 63 years old, I have been trying to change myself for a long period of time - I am exactly the same person.

Recognize that something here which is a treasure, recognize that you don't have to be here to receive it - but it is wonderful to be here. Recognize that this is a place of pilgrimage. When you leave, you are going to leave better. If you come here loving Jesus Christ, you are going to leave loving Him more. And this applies for all religions, and all persuasions - that is the gift of Swami. But even more than that - the answer is here. But it is not intellectual. **If you are seeking an answer, then I strongly recommend that you come here and seek silence.**

GV: Thank you sir for sparing so much of your time. Please do come again. Thank you, Sai Ram.

JS: Sai Ram.

‘Dare to be Different!’

by Dr Nitesh Patel

*‘Bhaja Govindam, Bhaja Govindam,
Govindam Bhaja Mudha Mathe.
Samprapte Sannihithe Kale,
Nahi Nahi Rakhshati Dukhrun Karane’*

“Chant the Name of Govinda, Chant the Name of Govinda! Chant the Name of Govinda, Oh foolish one! For when the end approaches, the rules of grammar which you have been learning will not be able to save you from the clutches of birth and death!”

Swami has on countless occasions repeated this famous verse from Shankaracharya’s *Bhaja Govindam*. The Lord in all His mercy has cautioned us so many times that the ‘rules of grammar’ – or secular, worldly knowledge that we clutter our brains with from dawn to dusk will not take us across the ocean of *Samsara*. It is only pure, selfless Love for God that is the ultimate key to open the door to the Kingdom of Sai.

Worldly Knowledge

This worldly knowledge can at best help us to earn a living and fill our belly! It is of course required to some limited extent. However, what is most essential to lead a sacred and blissful life is Pure Devotion to our Master.

Only recently, in one of His Discourses Swami was acting as a proud Mother! The Lord was explaining how some of His students, who have acquired even double degrees and were working in very reputable big companies for large salaries, gave it all up and pleaded with Swami to let them stay close to Him and serve at His Divine Lotus Feet. Mother Sai was so proud of Her children who were disinterested in the lures of the material world, but were contented to serve the Mother at home! No work was too low for them.

Unfortunately, schools today concentrate on filling young minds with mere book knowledge. They fail to inculcate Human Values, discipline and devotion in the students or guide them towards the goal of life.

The Goal of Life

But what is the Goal of Life? It is to be liberated from this feeling that we are separate from God. We should have the conviction that ‘God and I are one and the same’ that ‘this world is but an illusion and only God exists’. To develop this feeling or state of the mind, we need to intensify our Love for God. The ‘rules of grammar’ or worldly knowledge cannot help us reach this goal.

Then how to reach this goal? As Swami puts it so beautifully, we need to:

**“Follow the Master,
Face the Devil,
Fight to the End
and Finish the Game!”**

Follow the Master: the Master is *Dharma*. We must lead a righteous life, a life filled with Human Values.

Face the Devil: We need to avoid falling prey to the temptations that come our way when we try and earn money.

Fight to the End: We must fight off *Kama* or desires. For desires and attachments ultimately bring grief!

Finish the Game: We must attain the feeling of Oneness with the Lord and Liberation from ignorance.

Sense Control

Therefore, if we want to achieve success in this endeavour we must control the body, mind and senses! As Swami says, "Bend the Body, Mend the Senses and End the Mind". The ultimate aim is to attain that state where the Mind has been totally stilled, free from thoughts, and to experience the Oneness with God in the depth of that Supreme Silence!

The Mind has been compared to a lake. The water on the surface needs to be completely still and free from dust and dirt for a clear reflection of the Sun above. Similarly, the Mind has to be cleansed of all pollution and stilled to get a glimpse of the Indweller or *Atma* within. Unfortunately, the lake of the Mind is subject to dust and dirt being thrown into it on a daily basis through the misuse of our senses. Through the agitations of the body, the water is constantly trembling on the surface. We see all around us how people fail to control their body for even a few minutes – these agitations ultimately affect the Mind.

Through the senses, we pollute the Mind. For example, the eye acts like a camera and takes a photograph of all that it sees. This 'photographic film' is imprinted on the Mind, which becomes polluted from the bad scenes we see. The ears send bad vibrations of the gossip we hear. The tongue tastes foods which excite the Mind!

Therefore, it is most essential that we practise first and then teach our children that **control of the senses is the key to controlling the mind**. Control of the Mind will lead to equilibrium in the midst of activity!

The Eyes

We should practise taking only good food for the eyes – not watching irrelevant television, cinema, newspapers and magazines – Swami has said most clearly that TV should only be for educational or spiritual programmes. Swami has told us that it is harmful to read baseless fictional novels. Why teach kids 'Baa Baa Black Sheep' and lead them to become like black sheep? Instead expound the great truths of the sacred Scriptures and model their lives on sublime values. Dare to give up watching the favourite TV soaps, films, newspapers and magazines for Swami!

The Ears

The ears are subjected to so much pollution from all the gossip that we listen to. Swami says that the ears have been given to listen to the Divine Name of God. Dare to turn away from someone who is spreading gossip. Dare to give up listening to so called 'Pop' music including Bollywood songs – are there not enough spiritual songs and tunes to listen to?

The Tongue

Among the senses, the sense of speech deserves special mention. This is because it involves the tongue – which Swami says plays a central role in the control of the senses. The tongue has a dual function for both taste and speech and is liable to make mistakes on two accounts! The one who can control the tongue can verily control all the other senses. Swami has said that we talk far too much. We should talk softly, sweetly and only when there is pressing need. When we talk too much we lose our memory power, according to our Divine Master. Speech should be Truthful and in a pleasing manner. The ancient saints and sages practised silence for long periods – for it is said, ‘in the depths of silence can be heard the Voice of God!’ Dare to practise silence and not indulge in back-biting just because others are doing so.

We should only taste and consume *Sathwik* food which has been sanctified by the Name of the Lord. This helps keep us calm, peaceful and healthy. Dare to give up the tasty dishes that only serve to inflame or dull the Mind and fills us with passion and lust.

‘Dare to be different!’ This phrase was used by one of our Uncles from Malaysia and became imprinted on my mind from one of his talks a few years back. We should ‘**dare to be different**’ in our approach to educate the children and Youth. We should not encourage them to pollute their Minds from the misuse of the senses. We should be prime examples of sacrifice by giving up this false lifestyle and ideology that materialism has fathered. We should encourage them that God should be the central Focus of their Life – that they should enshrine the Lord within their heart and protect this shrine from all pollution by keeping a constant check on the senses, which are the doorways into this Temple of the Body.

We should have an unshakable faith in our Master. ‘Let the mountains be moved or destroyed, however my Faith in my Swami will not budge an inch!’

Padmapaad's Devotion

There are many examples of enlightened beings who had immense faith and devotion in the Master. They were not exemplary in worldly knowledge, yet all knowledge came to them through Divine Grace. One such person was Padmapaad who was a disciple of Sankaracharya. Unlike the other disciples of the Master, he was not interested in learning bookish knowledge. He was more concerned with devotional service to the Master. He used to take the Master’s clothes daily to the river to be washed. Because he did not pay much attention to his studies he was lagging behind and ridiculed by the other disciples for wasting his time in serving the Master.

One day whilst he was out washing the clothes, the river rose suddenly in a storm and he could not get back to the dry land. He simply prayed to his Master and, to the surprise of the other disciples watching from the dry land, a stone lotus flower appeared wherever he put his foot. Then another appeared and so on, until he was able to walk back to the river bank supported by these stones. At once the other disciples recognised their mistake and shouted ‘Glory to Padmapaad, Glory to our Master!’ The Master rewarded him for his exceptional devotion, blessing him with great joy and all knowledge was instantly given unto him. This story highlights how devotion to God is of utmost importance and should be the focus of all endeavours.

Educare

Swami says education is for earning a living whereas **Educare is for Life**. What is Educare? It involves bringing out the Human Values which are latent within us. Schools need to bring out

these Human Values which are but a natural process of our spiritual evolution. Just recently Swami explained the meaning of the *Navarathri* Festival. The Lord said that we should first give up our animal tendencies. Then we should manifest our Human Values which are latent within. Then finally we should manifest Divine qualities and become one with the Lord in thought, word and deed.

Swami has emphasised that what is important is not the 'marks' that you get, but the 'remarks' that you get. Better to have Love for God and an exemplary character than to be a scholar. Better to be 'good' than 'great'. Education can at best bring you to the doorstep, however it will not take you into the vast mansion of the Lord. Swami says 'Education is the beginning of Character' – it is not the Goal.

What education did Sabari have? Yet she was able to draw the Lord of the Universe, Sri Ram, to her little hut through her faultless devotion.

Let us intensify our love for God and practise control of the body, mind and senses to ultimately realise our Oneness with God. Let us be perfect examples for our children and the youth to follow. Let us '**Dare to be Different**' from the crowd by following our Swami with Duty, Discipline, Devotion, Determination, Discrimination and Dedication. Let us not fall prey or allow our children to fall prey to the immoral behaviour that has been spawned by television, cinema, radio, internet and mobile phone culture.

DARE TO BE DIFFERENT!

Give up now, from today, as an offering to Swami for this glorious 80th year of His Advent, this artificial life and develop a Life full of Love and Sacrifice!

Sai Ram.

(Dr. Nitesh Patel is an ENT Surgeon from UK who is currently working in the Royal National Throat, Nose and Ear hospital in London)

Godfather Einstein and Baba the Avatar

- Mark R. Abrams, Vermont, USA

Dear Reader,

Sometime around the 15th of February, someone had forwarded to H2H a paper called 'Einstein Revisited' by one Mr. Balwant Bhaneja. We were looking through the references of this paper and found that it contained a reference to an article in Sanathana Sarathi! We became curious and searched for this article and found it in the 1992 issue of Sanathana Sarathi. This was a two part article by Mark R. Abrams, whose father was the personal physician of Einstein! We were wondering why Swami sent this article to us at this point of time and upon further enquiries found out that the birthday of this great scientist was on March 14th! Strange are the ways of the Lord!

This is the first of the two part article, the second of which will appear in the next Issue. We hope you enjoy reading it.....

"Together with knowledge of the natural sciences, one has to acquire humility, discipline and a good character."

—Sathya Sai Baba

"If you want your life's work to be useful to mankind, it is not enough that you understand applied science as such. Concern for man himself must always constitute the chief objective of all technological effort, to assure that the results of our scientific thinking may be a blessing to mankind, and not a curse."

—Albert Einstein

Albert Einstein was my Godfather and a family friend. Over the years I have sought to increase my understanding of this great man, and the spiritual implications of his work. Einstein was a scientific giant who, perceiving the unified nature of reality, was able to express some of it mathematically. Beyond the role of scientist, he can best be thought of as a spiritual giant whose life, in terms of humility, compassion for humanity, and one-pointed focus on God, stands as an example of how Sathya Sai Baba teaches us to live most happily.

Albert Einstein stands as a precursor and example of the unique type of scientist so sorely needed in the world today, the type that Bhagavan is currently graduating from His Institute of Higher Learning. Under Swami's loving hand, these are "whole" scientists. Their aim is to benefit society and not merely accomplish selfish ends without thought to their work's impact upon humanity and the environment. These are scientists who combine spiritual awareness with state-of-the-art training. Swami's graduates are at the leading edge of discovery in various fields. Three recent Ph.D.'s in physics had the unheard-of experience of having their papers published in American physics journals within a year of receiving their degrees! Grounded in the truth that God is the source of all phenomena and knowledge, they maintain the perspective that the best path to understanding creation is to study the Creator.

Einstein also was this type of scientist, and his life was guided by this principle. His overriding goal was to "Understand how the 'Old One' thinks." And he devoted his life to the effort to gain "knowledge of the ultimate immutable essence that underlies the mutable, illusory world."

In the first part of this article I will mention some personal stories about my family, Baba and Einstein. The second part will include some of Einstein's thoughts on science, spirituality, education and character, as well as what Swami had to say about him during a recent interview.

Although Einstein was deeply saddened by the ironic fact that some of his work led to the development of nuclear weapons, we might also consider that the work also holds within it a scientific illustration of the spiritual truth. This article will conclude with some musings on how some of Einstein's work may be useful as one more 'tool' to help free us from *Maya* and accept the unseen *Atma* as the fundamental truth of life.

My father, Dr. Henry Abrams, opened his general medical practice in Princeton, New Jersey, in 1938. A year later, the physician who had been caring for Prof. Einstein, his daughter Margot and secretary Miss Helen Dukas, was leaving for further training. He approached my father and asked if he would care to take over, and he readily agreed. He cared for Einstein and the others until the outbreak of World War II.

GODFATHER EINSTEIN

During the war my father was stationed on the cold and desolate island of Greenland. He and Einstein corresponded. While in Greenland my father received a letter from Einstein remarking that this should be a "contemplative period" for him, and urging him to consider getting further medical training in some speciality. Subsequently, my father did that, and returned to Princeton as the town's sole ophthalmologist. When I was born in 1949, he asked the professor, as Einstein preferred to be called, if he would be my Godfather, and Einstein consented. Thus, following Jewish tradition, Einstein was the one who held me for the *eris Milah*, the ritual circumcision ceremony. He was to have a minor contact, but a major impact over my life in the years to come. Further, because in the West the Godfather is considered a child's spiritual teacher, I have come to consider Professor Einstein to be the first of several spiritual teachers in this life. They ultimately led me to Bhagavan.

Einstein died when I was six, and my recollections of him are few. I do remember that he had a very nice laugh, which he used often. For my fourth birthday, my parents and I were invited for a small celebration. My uncle took the opportunity to photograph the Professor and me dealing with the gifts that his secretary had obtained: a toy log cabin and a bag of foil-covered chocolates in the form of "gold coins." It was this latter which occupied most of my attention. Professor Einstein worked on the log cabin, trying to fit the simple pieces of wood together. Interestingly, when I grew up and printed all the negatives, there was a picture of my mother leaning over Professor Einstein and the logs, showing him how the ends joined.

Of course at that young age I had no idea of what was so special about being around this nice old man. It wasn't until I was at college that I really began to appreciate the honour of being his Godson and to consider what his scientific work meant.

I discovered meditation at the age of twenty. As my spiritual journey proceeded I became intensely curious as to what my link was with such a luminous soul.

EINSTEIN AND THE GITA

Baba found me at twenty-three. As you can imagine, I regarded my first trip to the *Avatar* as a possible opportunity, among other things, to learn more about my relationship with Einstein. It may come as no surprise that throughout these and subsequent trips, *Leelas* have been the order of the day.

Baba, the consummate "tour guide", treated my wife Marsha and me to a host of travel experiences over the course of my first visit to India. We had no desire to be anywhere but where He was, and since He went to Delhi, Madras and Hyderabad we were overjoyed to be allowed to follow Him.

In Hyderabad a most interesting incident occurred during a discourse Swami was giving in a large auditorium. It was very hot and I had just eaten lunch. As time went on, I realized to my horror that I was being overtaken by a powerful drowsiness. As I was sinking into *thamas*, I projected a thought to the Lord: "*Baba, the only thing that could keep me from falling asleep right now is if You were to mention Einstein...*" I knew He could do it but didn't really expect it at all and continued my descent. Within sixty seconds, my head thrust backward as Swami's lilting pronunciation of the name "*Einstein*" entered my consciousness from His ongoing flow of Telugu.

I was awake then, and became riveted to the story He recounted of how a young Indian physicist during an appointment with Einstein eagerly probed for the ultimate in Western scientific wisdom. What he received from Einstein however, was, to roughly quote Swami, "Every major conclusion I've arrived at is contained in your *Bhagavad Gita*. Look there!"

My curiosity about the connection was inflamed anew! I was dying to get some insight into "why me?" As Swami's translator for the discourse was himself a nuclear physicist, I approached him afterwards hoping for some kernel of insight. He had nothing personally to share, and as far as learning more from Sai he said, "I counsel patience..." I was disappointed but left knowing I had received sound advice.

AT PRASHANTI NILAYAM

Approximately one month later we found ourselves in the interview room at Prashanti Nilayam. I was sitting on the floor just to Swami's right as He was talking to various people in the group. Seeing His footstool off to the side and recalling how frequently He is seen using one, I took the opportunity to perform the logical but minor *Seva* of placing it in position. He accepted and I felt happy. After some time there was a lull in the give and take of conversation. No one was asking questions and Swami was silent, save for the quiet phrase "And you sir?" drawing the words out slowly. The thought came that He seemed to be addressing me. I was at a complete loss for words. I was embarrassed to be addressed personally in front of the group. I definitely had something I wanted to ask and whether I was being addressed or not, it was an absolutely clear, appropriate chance to approach Baba about it. Perhaps as many as two or even three solid minutes passed. An ego-based lack of confidence prevented me from simply asking, "What is my connection to Einstein, Baba?" I feel Baba gave me many chances there, but finally a new dialogue began with someone else. The moment was lost and I clearly could not cut in. I was to wonder many times after that if the opportunity might not have been lost forever.

That was in 1978. More blessed interviews occurred in ensuing years and questions about more important matters were raised than about my Godfather. It was okay; I had become patient and accepted that He would reveal whatever I needed to know in its own best time.

After Professor Einstein's death in 1955, Miss Einstein and Miss Dukes remained patients of my father and friends of the family, remembering birthdays and attending my *Bar Mitzvah* at 13. My mother sometimes gave them rides around town as they did not drive.

For sometime I had had a yearning to visit Einstein's home to see his study. In 1983 my sister planned to get married in Princeton and this looked like a good opportunity. My father called Miss Einstein to arrange a visit and on a cold December day he, my stepmother and I spent about two hours chatting with this completely unassuming artist in the parlour of the house where she had lived for close to fifty years. She told us of her time spent studying art at a convent in Italy and showed us a beautiful little wax sculpture of Saint Francis, for whom she had a special affection.

EINSTEIN'S STUDY

Somewhat paralleling that 1978 interview with Swami, I had been feeling some reserve during this conversation about requesting to see the Professor's study. This woman was elderly and appeared frail and I didn't want to trouble her by an extra trip upstairs. Clearly it was getting time to go. I had to act quickly or the chance would be lost. Thinking of Swami I made my request and she responded with an enthusiastic "Sure!!" and charged up the stairs to the room in question. On the way we passed her father's bedroom which was very plainly furnished, like a monastic cell. Then we were in the study. Bookshelves lined the walls, and a wide window faced a deep garden in the back of the house. To the left of this picture-window were two portraits, one of a bearded Jewish sage, the other of Mahatma Gandhi. One shelf contained all of the original issues of "*Der Annalen der Physik*" (Annual of Physics), the journal in which both Theories of Relativity were first published. Then, just as I noticed a large easy chair and footstool, Miss Einstein "commanded" me to sit in it. How could I refuse? I smiled broadly to myself, remembering Swami's footstool and feeling His subtle presence in what for me was a meaningful coincidence. We took pictures, looked around a bit more and left. Later, I remembered Swami had said Einstein had a copy of the *Bhagavad Gita* and wished I'd looked for it.

As we left, my father recalled the time, years before, when he'd brought his brother-in-law Elliott Montroll over for what Einstein's formidable secretary had said would only be a three-minute appointment. My uncle, who was to be later named to the Einstein Chair of Physics at the University of Rochester, would have been overjoyed just to have shaken hands, but Einstein offered them lunch. They declined. My uncle ended up spending half an hour at Einstein's dining room table, talking and laughing with him about physics, while my father beamed with joy, understanding not one word.

SERVICE TO HUMANITY

My father, only on being asked recently, recounted to me how every three or four months for some years he would receive a call from Einstein's secretary asking him if he might be able to spare a few minutes, as the Professor wished to talk. Somehow, especially in the early years of his practice, he always found time to go over, for discussions involving the non-scientific topics his host was interested in, such as philosophy, and world and national events.

Always straightforward and humble in human dealings, Einstein came to accept and use the bewildering fame that was thrust upon him in the only way that made sense to him—service to humanity. He worked tirelessly throughout his life promoting peace, freedom, and respect for all people.

Dad recalled how Einstein's efforts during the 1930's and World War II enabled a certain number of Jews to escape Nazi persecution. The Professor also spent many years working for the United Jewish Appeal in establishing the state of Israel and accepted my father's invitation to co-chair the local fundraising campaign with him in Princeton for several years.

My father considers himself a rational scientific and appropriately skeptical man, who, while loving his religion and believing in God, puts great stock in what can be touched, seen, and measured.

A SIVARATHRI VISIT

My wife Marsha returned from her first trip to Swami in 1977. She had been present at the last public *Mahasivarathri*, during which our beloved Swami manifested *Vibhuti*, showered the audience with *Ram Tirth*, and produced what Professor Kasturi was later to describe as a "self-illuminating *crystal Lingam*" (emphasis mine).

Soon after her return, Marsha and I were on a visit to my father and stepmother. When they asked her, "Tell us about your trip in India," she proceeded to do just that, with all the enthusiasm of one who had just returned from her first three months with the *Avatar*.

Producing photographs of Swami holding up the glowing *Lingam*, Marsha excitedly explained to this senior medical man how Sai Baba produced this unidentifiable object in His body, and then brought it forth from His mouth every year to the delight of His devotees. This was, to say the least, very difficult for my father to grasp or accept.

We did not know it at the time, but this conversation was a turning point in our relationship with our folks. Being so unfamiliar with anyone even remotely like Sai Baba they felt sure that we were being taken in by a master magician, and "feared for our sanity". As the years passed however, their fears abated when they perceived we had not given up personal control over our lives, and continued to develop as human beings.

"SUBTLE IS THE LORD"

Three years after this visit we were back again, talking in that room where the fateful exchange had taken place. I was browsing in the kitchen cabinets when I spied a set of goblets I had never seen before—of clear heavy crystal. "Hey Nona!" I called to my stepmother with mild curiosity, "Where did you get the crystal goblets?" "Oh, those were a gift to your father from Dr. Sivalingam." "Oh." I replied.

So, the sceptical doctor who so profoundly doubted Lord Siva's ability to produce a *Lingam* of crystal, had himself received crystal from a doctor named Sivalingam! And unknowingly participated in an exquisite first-hand experience of what Einstein might have meant when he proclaimed, in referring to how "nature conceals her sublimity": "SUBTLE IS THE LORD..."

At the time I could not even comment, finally bringing it to their attention two or three years later.

To be concluded

(from January 1992, Sanathana Sarathi)

The Divine Story of Shirdi Sai Parthi Sai - Part 3 **(Continued from the previous issue)**

The husband leaves home, constantly chanting the Name of the Lord, without looking back even once. He is determined to go to the forest, meditate, have the Lord's *Darshan*, and merge in Him. The children are bewildered and start crying. Devagiri Amma is confused and torn between two minds. On the one hand she wants to follow her husband. On the other hand she is drawn towards her children. She decides that she will leave her children to the care of someone else and go behind her husband, despite the advanced stage of her pregnancy. She goes to the house of a neighbour and knocks on her door.

SCENE 5

D.AMMA: Radhabai, Radhabai, ... [to children] you wait here.

RADHABAI: Devagiri Amma! What happened? Have you quarrelled with your husband? Are you going to your mother's place?

D.AMMA: No. My husband is disappointed that he did not get the *Darshan* of Parvathi and Parameshwara. So he is going in search of God! My duty is to be by my husband's side and serve him. I am therefore going with him.

RADHABAI: Devagiri Amma, think carefully. It is not good for you to go in your present state. At least for the sake of these young children here, please change your decision.

D.AMMA: God Himself has decided that I should go in this manner. No one can change His decision! Lady, help me please, and take my two children to my mother's house.

RADHABAI: Alright, I shall do so.

D.AMMA: Please! Please do me this great favour!

The Children cry as Devagiri Amma leaves them and goes behind her husband. He keeps on chanting *Om Namah Sivayah!* He does not look back even once, though Devagiri Amma repeatedly calls out to him. He enters a forest and his wife continues to trail him; but she finds it more and more difficult. Meanwhile she develops labour pains. At this juncture a fierce storm breaks out. The lady takes shelter under a tree. There a baby boy is born. The storm abates. Devagiri Amma carefully wraps up the baby, places it in a safe dry spot and leaves, going in search of her husband.

ACT II

SCENE 1

A horse drawn cart is going through the forest and approaches the spot where Devagiri Amma has abandoned her new-born baby. In the cart are travelling a man and a lady, Mr. And Mrs Patel. They hear the baby crying.

MRS PATEL: Please, let us stop for a moment. I hear a baby crying.

PATEL: [to the driver] Ismail, stop the cart.[to his wife] Yes, I also hear the crying. Come, let us go and see.

MRS PATEL: Somewhere here.....I heard the crying sound coming from somewhere here.

PATEL: Yes, me too.

MRS PATEL: Over there! The sound seems to be coming from there!

PATEL: Yes indeed!

MRS PATEL: Look! The baby is here! It is a new-born!!Strange! There is no one around.

PATEL: Yes, no one seems to be around. Is it a boy or a girl?

MRS PATEL: What does it matter? Either way, it is a mother's child!

PATEL: It is a boy!

MRS PATEL: This is a new-born baby. It must have been born just a short while ago. How did the mother have the heart to leave the baby like this and go?

PATEL: This baby is God's gift to us, since we have no children of our own.

MRS. PATEL: If we had not come, this baby would have been in great danger! Shall we take this baby and bring it up?

PATEL: Yes. Our bad days are over; from today, this baby is our child.

The Patels are overjoyed. They pick up the baby, and take it to their home. Most affectionately, they bring the boy up. This is the young Shirdi Sai. A few years pass.

SCENE 2

Mrs. Patel is engaged in worship at home. She is looking for the lamp, as she wants to light it.

MRS. PATEL: I had kept it here but don't see it now. Where could it have gone?

The lady sees that the boy has taken the lamp away and is trying to light it in some other place.

MRS. PATEL: Child, What are you trying to do? Is this the place to light the lamp?

YOUNG SAI: Why not?

MRS. PATEL: The lamp should be lit only in the altar, before God. You can't do it where you want and when you want.

YOUNG SAI: Mother, God is everywhere, and all the time! Both the lamp and light are God, are they not? Where there is light, there is GOD!

MRS.PATEL: Child, how do you know all these things?

YOUNG SAI: I know! You should not ask how!!

PATEL: Did you hear? How nicely our son explains!! This is not just due to the merits of his earlier births; it is something much beyond. No one can explain in this manner at such a tender age! Come, come my dear!

The lady continues with her worship. Meanwhile, Young Sai is distributing *Prasaadam* to his friends.

YOUNG SAI: You,..... you too,hold out your hand,.....OK, now pray and then eat.

MRS.PATEL: Oh no! What is it that you are doing my child! Can one eat before offering to God? Is it not wrong? Will not God get angry?

YOUNG SAI: No mother, God won't be angry. God is above anger, sorrow, love, attachment, revenge and such petty feelings. He is just a Witness!

MRS.PATEL: Great, you and your high-flown philosophy!

YOUNG SAI: No mother, this is not high philosophy. It is the Truth. Don't they say that God is everywhere? He **IS** everywhere! He is in us too. When we eat this *Prasaadam* or when some other being eats it, it is really God who eats! Mother, what I am doing is not wrong.

MRS.PATEL (to husband): Did you hear what he said?

PATEL: What he is saying are not just words but the very essence of the scriptures! Only the Wise can understand the meaning of those words.

MRS PATEL: This boy baffles me. Shouldn't one go by tradition, rituals, and culture? (Slips and is about to fall; but recovers, assisted by husband.)

PATEL: What happened?

MRS PATEL: God saved me! Otherwise, I would have been badly injured.

YOUNG SAI: Mother, do you now follow? You said that God saved you. But it was father who held you and prevented you from falling down. That means God is in father also. That is why they say God is everywhere!

MRS PATEL: Only now am I able to understand what you said. Tiny fingers may light the lamp but the lamp can illumine a whole mountain! How nicely a small one like you could explain a Truth as vast as the very ocean! Come on, have this; take this *Prasaadam*! All of you also have *Prasaadam*. When you eat, I shall take it that the Lord Himself has partaken of the offering
..... Oh God, what else can I say?!

(To be continued)

Gita for Children - Part 5

(Continued from the previous issue)

14. 'People imagine that sacrifice means giving up something valuable or giving away something precious, something that you would very much like to keep for yourself. This is a very limited interpretation of the word sacrifice. I use that word in a larger sense. I would in fact prefer to use the word offering in place of the word sacrifice.'

15. 'Here I should caution you about what happens when the key principle is misunderstood and followed in a mistaken fashion. For example, many people think they should give charity so that they can go to heaven. This is wrong. When charity is given this way, the giver of charity starts feeling he is superior to the one receiving. Giving should not at all be done that way. One must give as a loving offering to a brother, who also is a child of God. In other words, the spirit must be one of sharing and caring, and not of condescension, and without any expectations of any kind from anybody.'

16. 'The people who give charity and food to beggars with the idea of booking a seat in heaven are really trying to make a business deal! God is so kind that He may even reserve a seat in heaven for such people. But Arjuna, God should not be trivialised like this by asking Him for trinkets! You may be a businessman but God is not. Remember that!'

17. 'Well, how then should one relate to God? That is your unstated question, is it not? The answer is simple. Look upon God as your Father, Mother, *Guru*, and even Friend. Are you surprised? You should not be because God is the only true Friend you can have. All others would make themselves scarce when you need assistance and help most. God is not like that. On the contrary, it is in those dire moments that He would be closest to you. Also, do whatever you are doing for God's pleasure.'

18. 'For example, right now I am asking you to fight. When you start fighting say, "God, I offer this duty I am doing as a soldier to You. Please accept it as my loving offering to You! I want nothing in return but Your Grace and Love".'

19. 'Everyone can make an offering to God in this manner, including a cobbler. Are you wondering how the cobbler ought to pray? Simple. He should just say, "Lord, in Your Cosmic Drama You have given me this particular role. My prayer to You is that a) I do my job to the best of my ability, and b) my slippers bring comfort and satisfaction to the buyer, who is none other than You in disguise. When my customer is satisfied, it means that You are satisfied!"'

20. 'So you see how perfection combined with selflessness can readily sanctify action. Every act without exception, including the smallest, can be sanctified in this manner.'

21. 'Take food. You are able to eat on account of God's Grace and not because of your salary. But for God's Grace, you would be jobless and hungry. Having received food as Divine Grace, how do you express your gratitude to God? By sharing your food with someone else. Give some food first to a starving soul, see him happy, and then eat. That would fill you also with happiness.'

22. 'Arjuna, it is a sin to eat without first sharing your food with some other person. Suppose no one is available; no problem. Share it with some birds or even ants. In any case, you can always offer the food first to God. In fact this is a must I would say.'

23. ‘When you so offer, say a simple prayer, “O God, who is in me and taking care of me all the time in a thousand different ways that I am not even aware of, I offer this food to You, my Indweller. Please accept.”’
24. ‘No Arjuna, this is not a gimmick. It is an attitude of Mind that reflects the virtues of the Heart. See God everywhere and try to please Him with all the actions that you perform. God does not expect anything special from you. He would be extremely happy if you transform your duty into devotion and work into worship by following My simple formula.’
25. Arjuna says, ‘Krishna, all this is fine, but what has it got to do with the Path of Action and the Path of Wisdom that You were telling me about?’
26. Krishna replies, ‘Arjuna, that precisely is what I am coming to now. When your Mind is full of thoughts of God and your Heart is immersed in God, you would automatically become Wise! *Yad Bhavam, Tat Bhavati*. As you feel, so you become. Think of God who is the Embodiment of Knowledge all the time, and you automatically become Wise yourself – that’s all! Thus, for the man on the Path of Action, the three steps are: Work - Worship - Wisdom.’
27. ‘Let Me now tell you something about the man who is following the Path of Wisdom. Such a man is inward-looking, that is to say, for him the world is essentially inside.’
28. ‘What does this man find inside? He sees God seated in his Heart. He sees the Heart as the symbol of Perfection and Absolute Purity. He sees God seething with Love. Becoming absorbed in that Love, he gets charged with it.’
29. ‘So charged is he with Love, that when he starts looking out into the world, he sees only Love everywhere. To him, nothing outside is bad, though ordinary mortals might see some things as good and others as bad. This man is above all such duality.’
30. ‘The inward-looking man is one of Wisdom. He might seem a strange person to ordinary people, but he is neither strange nor mad. He is his True Self and in his Natural State, the State of Bliss. If at all he is mad, he is mad about God. But then Arjuna, tell Me who in this world is not mad? Some are mad about money, some about power, some about position and so on. Compared to all these types of madness, is not being mad about God much better?’
31. ‘The Wise are always in a State of Bliss. At times, they might appear to be in a trance. At times, they would be happily singing to themselves or rather the God within, and at times they would be just dancing with joy! Obviously such people are very rare, about one in a billion or so, but believe Me, they do exist.’
32. Arjuna says, ‘Krishna, the way You describe, these Wise men as You call them, appear to live in their own world and have nothing whatsoever to do with the world we ordinary mortals live in. Is that true?’
33. Krishna smiles and replies, ‘Well Arjuna, really speaking, the Wise do not have duties to perform in the sense you have. You have to perform duty in order to attain fulfilment. This they achieve in an entirely different way. Yet, in their own way, the Wise too act and serve in this world.’

34. 'You want to know how? Let Me explain. By their very nature, the Wise "radiate" Peace. They have a captivating aura of Supreme Calm about them. They are ever smiling. Troubled souls therefore go to such people to have their *Darshan*, and when they do so, they feel at peace themselves, at least for a while. Is not applying the balm of *Shanti* a service? How many people are there in this troubled world who can render such service? Shining with the Effulgence of Love, speaking softly, gently and soothingly, is also service, in fact extremely valuable service. Thus, the Wise act as Lighthouses in a stormy world.'

(To be continued...)

Cleanliness is Godliness: Sai Seva in West Bengal

West Bengal is a state in the eastern part of India, adjoining Bangladesh. The famous city of Calcutta is the capital of this state which produced three Nobel laureates for India! And now the state is once more setting an ideal in following the Lord's command: Love all; Serve all!

People are quite careful about the way they use toilets at home but when it comes to public toilets, it is a different story in most parts of the World. No one seems to bother and rather quickly these toilets become unusable, there is intense stench making everyone complain but that is where the matter usually ends. But in places where there are people driven by pure idealism and a concern for public health, as Sai Youth are, it is a different matter. No false sense of dignity comes in the way; instead, it is an urgent desire to clean up the mess and improve the sanitary conditions. They talk of unsung heroes; one can see them here. The task may appear menial but that precisely is what transforms zeros into Heroes.

In the picture alongside, we see a small railway station, and Sai Volunteers cleaning the urinal in the station. This is supposedly menial work and anyway, sanitation is the railway's problem is it not? Maybe, but real life does not often work out that way. True, the railways are formally responsible but they too have their difficulties including financial crunch. So does one just talk endlessly about the problem? That is what usually happens but not here. Alive to the dangers of unsanitary conditions, these volunteers are essentially saying: "This is OUR station, and well, if no one is going to keep it clean, we will." Today, most people act as if they are not connected with Society and that they owe nothing to it. That is wrong. As Swami often tells His students, "You are what you are because of Society."

Every year in the month of January there is a festival called the *Ganga Sagar Mela* during which nearly half a million people converge on the spot where the Ganges enters the Bay of Bengal. On the ocean front, there are no toilet facilities that can handle such massive crowds. Sanitation becomes a huge problem but for the last fifteen years, nearly two hundred Sai Volunteers camp there just to remove night soil and keep the beaches clean. All this noble and selfless work has not escaped the eyes of senior administration in the State. Deeply appreciative of the spirit of service shown by the members of the Organisation, they have now slowly begun to make specific requests of their own. For example, in 2004, the District magistrate of Bankura contacted the Sai Organisation with a request; the Gandheshwari River flowing through Bankura town was dry most of the year. During that period thick vegetation grew covering a large part of the river. The area was then promptly converted into a garbage dump. Would the Organisation please clear the riverbed? The Organisation's answer is there for all to see in the picture alongside.

Prashanti Diary A Slide Show of Events

JANUARY 28th, 2005, MORNING: DISTRIBUTION OF SEWING MACHINES TO THE NEEDY

The morning of the 28th saw Sai Kulwant Hall full with about 7000 devotees from the district of Ananthapur who had come as a group to have a *Darshan* of their Lord. On this day there was also a distribution of about 94 sewing machines and 4 wet grinders to selected poor and needy people thus affording them a means of livelihood.

In a moving ceremony, each of the recipients, came forward as their names were read out, bowed down and offered a rose to the Lord and then received from Him a means of support that would change their lives!

JANUARY 28th, EVENING: ANANTHAPUR DISTRICT DRAMA - 'ANANTHA VARADAYEE SRI SATHYA SAYEE'

The *Bala Vikas* children from Ananthapur presented a dance drama in the afternoon entitled "*Anantha Varadayee* (The Bestower of Boons) Sri Sathya Sai". The dance drama was presented in six modules. The first module presented the Lord as the infinite boon giver; the second dealt with the boon of the educational institutions. This was followed in turn by the modules on the Super Speciality Hospitals, the *Deenajanodarana Pathakam* (Swami's orphanage), and *Grama Seva*. The sixth module dealt with the Ananthapur Water Supply Project. The final scene was titled '*Om Sri Sai Jagad Rakshakaya Namaha*' - or 'Sai the Protector of the Universe'!

JANUARY 30th: THYAGARAJA ARADAHANA DAY

Thyagraja *Aradhana* or 'glorification or worship of the composer-saint Sri Thyagaraja' is held every year on *Pushya Bagula Panchami* day (according to the Hindu calendar) when the saint attained *Mahasamadhi*. Renowned musicians gather at his resting place at Tiruvaiyaru, near Thanjavur in Tamilnadu to pay a musical homage to this great saint.

The Principal, staff and students of the Sai Mirpuri Music College also paid homage to this saint on this 158th anniversary day, by singing *Pancharatna kirtis* followed by a selection of the saint's compositions and held the audience spellbound for over an hour and a half.

FEBRUARY 4th: 'SARVA MATHAMULA SARAM- SAI MATHAM' A DRAMA BY THE BALA VIKAS CHILDREN OF VIZIANAGARAM DISTRICT

About 74 children presented a drama depicting Sai as the essence of all religions. A poor sculptor on finding a black stone in the jungle is trying to decide which deity he should chisel out of the stone. Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, and Zoroastrians all try to prevail upon the poor sculptor to sculpt the respective deities of their own religion. A fight then ensues on the superiority of each religion over the others.

Suddenly an ethereal voice coming out of the stone declares Sai's teaching – "There is only one caste, the caste of humanity; only one religion, the religion of love and only one God who is omnipotent". All religions then pay homage to Sai.

FEBRUARY 9th: BHEEMA RATHA SHANTI - DISTRIBUTION OF CLOTHES AND JEWELLERY FOR THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY

Swami out of His infinite compassion decided to conduct an auspicious ceremonial marriage rite for couples aged 70 years and over. Termed as '*Bheema Ratha Shanti 2005*', this grand and unique ceremony was to be held on Feb 10th.

On Feb 9th, Swami had all the 275 eligible couples, selected from the staff and village residents, assembled in Sai Kulwant Hall and distributed clothes to the couples and jewellery for the bride to wear for the marriage ceremony the next day. The beautiful maroon coloured *sari* for the bride and the plush *dhoti* and *angaveshtram* for the groom left everyone in awe and in tears of gratitude. Jewellery items like earrings and silver anklets were also given by the generous Lord. Truly, only He knows how to give!

FEBRUARY 10th: MORNING - BHEEMA RATHA SHANTI - A SECOND MARRIAGE FOR COUPLES OVER 70 YEARS OLD

The 275 couples entered Sai Kulwant Hall at around 8:30 a.m. in a procession from the Old Kalyana Mantap. The entire Sai Kulwant Hall was decked with carpets and a small area was 'fenced off' for each of the 275 couples; they were also provided with a table and chairs and all the ingredients to perform this *Vedic* rite. Looking radiantly beautiful Swami blessed all the couples profusely, and even went around and personally handed over the *Mangal Sutra* to each couple before the ceremony.

The ceremony was well conducted by a knowledgeable priest and there was also a brief tribal dance at the end of the ceremony. All the couples and their guests were later provided a sumptuous lunch at the South Indian canteen.

FEBRUARY 10th: EVENING - DIVINE DISCOURSE AND A SUDHA RAGHUNATH CONCERT

In the afternoon, Swami still being in a mood to provide further blessings gave an unexpected discourse. Swami said that we are incorrectly ignoring these elders thinking them to be useless to society. The strength and energy latent in these elders are not to be found in youth. Any new activity will become fruitful only when you take the guidance of elders. Afterwards there was a concert by the renowned singer Ms Sudha Raghunath. Her family have been ardent devotees for nearly 60 years and she expresses her devotion for Swami through her mellifluous voice. Swami made a chain for her and also profusely blessed all the group members at the end.

FEBRUARY 15th: 'MOMENTS OF GRATITUDE' - A DRAMA BY THE X STANDARD BOYS OF THE SRI SATHYA SAI HIGH SCHOOL

This drama was staged by the tenth class of the Higher Secondary school to express their thanks to Swami for their 10 years stay at His Lotus Feet and for the immense love that He gave each and every one of them. The programme consisted of songs, skits, narration of their experiences of His divinity, and the application of Swami's teachings to their real life problems.

The students expressed their heartfelt gratitude to Swami through their talks and heart melting songs. Being immensely pleased, Bhagavan manifested a chain for a student and also posed for the coveted group photographs with the entire tenth class. Swami also blessed that they do well in their public exams.

FEBRUARY 17th: CELEBRATION OF THE CHINESE NEW YEAR AT PRASHANTI NILAYAM

The Chinese New Year celebrations last over 15 days. On the ninth day, prayers are offered to the Heavenly Father (*Tian Gong*).

Chinese devotees from Singapore dressed in their brightly coloured new clothes, came to pay their respects to their divine parent on this holy day. The celebration proceeded with the chanting of the Hindu *Mantra* '*Avalokitesvara*' mentioning the names of Shiva, Vishnu, Narasimha, Lakshmi and Varaham in Chinese. Choir singing of Chinese songs expressing their love and devotion for Swami followed next. The programme concluded with the singing of Chinese *Bhajans* to our Lord.

Devotees were given traditional Chinese red packets (*hong bao*) of sweets as *Prasadam*, and also mandarin oranges after they were offered to Swami.

Dear Reader,

Here is a beautiful description of *Darshan* in the old Brindavan days.....

In His Footsteps

*Master, go on, and I will follow Thee,
To the last breath, in truth and loyalty.*

It is time! Baba enters the private room of His residence. It is *Darshan* time in Brindavan! He will soon emerge out of the room and walk towards the gate, outside which have gathered hundreds of devotees, seated on the ground, tensely expectant, silent, and each one full of intense hope that Bhagavan will have a special word of solace... perhaps bestow on them some gesture of love and compassion... or even the much coveted Interview!

The main gate is opened by a couple of volunteers. Baba comes out, a radiant smile on His handsome face. His light-shaded red robe and His magnificent hair shine as if some divine, effulgent light is falling upon His exquisitely charming, slim figure. He stands outside the gate for a moment and casts His eyes on the large crowd of men, women and children. They have come from all parts of India and many from abroad. Baba's gaze has an electrifying effect upon them. One seems to be merged with some supreme power, a *Mahashakti*. The whole atmosphere is charged with love, *Prema*. Baba is compassion personified. As He stands there surveying the devotees for a few minutes, His hands make a few significant gestures - perhaps of encouragement, solace and benediction. For Baba knows each individual among the crowd. He can probe into each person's inner depths, understand each devotee's needs and problems.

He is now moving towards the devotees seated in long, almost interminable lines - men on one side and women on the other. A lady suddenly gets up and approaches Him, and in a voice trembling with some deep agony oppressing her heart, whispers a few words to this incarnation of the Divine, who is now amongst us, to fulfill the solemn assurance He had given ages ago, to Arjuna on the tumultuous battlefield of Kurukshetra:

**Whenever there is decay of *Dharma* and rise of *Adharma*.
O, Bharat, then I embody Myself age after age.**

He listens to the lady. He knows what is troubling her. At once, He stretches slightly His right hand, makes a brief rotating movement with the hand and a small quantity of sacred *Vibhuti* appears. He pours it into the woman's palm... there are tears in her eyes, not of sorrow, but of a deep satisfaction, *Ananda*. His divine touch on her head has expelled all her doubts and fears. They are tears of gratitude, of love.

A few steps.... under the shade of the tree near the gate, He sees a sick child crippled by some disease. He makes a beeline towards the child. The parents and other members of the family gather around him. Baba knows exactly what is wrong with the child. He is an *Avatar*—omnipotent and omniscient. Men must work out their *Karma*, but the Lord's grace is even more powerful. He knows best what to do in each case of suffering. His compassion can dissolve the effects of *Karma*, mitigate its rigours. Baba soothes the parents and relatives of the child by a few encouraging words, pats the child's head and, mystery of mysteries, He tells the parents all about the child's illness, again materialises the sacred *Vibhuti* and applies it lovingly to the child's limbs. The gloom that has enveloped the child's parents vanishes. Baba has been the bringer of a new

hope, a strengthened faith in a power that is beyond our petty calculations. The *Veda* describes the Supreme as "*Aprapya Manasasaha*", beyond the utmost bounds of human intelligence and logic.

"God moving among men", I hear someone whisper to His neighbour. As he says these words, his eyes moisten. A flickering conviction, perhaps, but at the moment in Baba's presence, he is deeply moved. And so are hundreds of others. In Baba's mere presence, the atmosphere becomes instantaneously charged with a light and splendour "that never was on sea or land", a glory which can hardly be described in human speech. As He moves along between the two rows of devotees, many make desperate attempts to catch His eye or attract His attention. Eager, tear-filled eyes, faces drawn with pain, some nameless anxiety or fear, broken hearts, frustrated personalities, men and women groaning under the heavy burden of worldly cares and problems, guilt-conscious persons seeking divine forgiveness, aspirants of the spirit in search of a supremely self-realised being... others, anxious for some token of compassion and still others in grave need of some earthly benefit; they are all there.

The *Gita* speaks of four kinds of *Bhaktas*; *arto*, *jijnasur*, *artharathi*, and *Jnani* - the man in distress, the man seeking knowledge, the man seeking wealth and the man imbued with wisdom. All these types are here and many more, the derelicts and the abandoned... sometimes those who come to see Baba merely out of curiosityskeptics and atheists, wanderers who have assumed the garb of *Sannyasis* to maintain themselves without work, the waifs and strays of the world. He sometimes reveals an uncanny understanding of those who somehow do not fit themselves into the atmosphere of the place.

All eyes are focused on the slim, radiant, beloved figure. With folded hands they gaze into His eyes. He stops, before a group; the miracle of the sacred *Vibhuti* is repeated. His eyes soften with deep compassion as some old lady attempts to touch His Feet. "No, *Bangaroo*," He tells her. *Bangaroo* is a favourite word of affection with Baba. As He utters it to a devotee, it opens out unlimited realms of divine solicitude for the smallest of His devotees. It is the "open sesame" that opens the doors of one's heart; its sweetness lingers in the heart for days, it vibrates and reverberates in one's soul. *Bangaroo* is a Telugu word meaning "gold". When I first heard it addressed to me, many years ago, I felt as if I was lifted to the heavens. It has continued to haunt me, and whenever Baba utters the magic word to me, I am filled with joy and peace which seem to have no bounds. Attuned, Baba stands perfectly still, deeply absorbed in Himself. He brings to my mind the figure of the Supreme Yogi—untouched by the waves of this worldly ocean. Only He knows what He is thinking about—the past, present and future of creation, and perhaps, His long, unbroken lineage of Himself from generation to generation: "Many are the births taken by me and you, O Arjuna. I know them all while you know not, O Parantapa." These are the words of Krishna in the *Gita*.

Baba is the consciousness that abides in eternity, a consciousness not erased or fragmented by the endless passage of eons, a consciousness that survives the universe's cataclysms and transformations. He is the ONE that remains while the many change and pass.

He walks sometimes briskly, hardly noticing the crowd, silent, detached, not even a smile at them. Not that He is indifferent. He knows when He should speak to a particular devotee. His blessings are there—an integral, inseparable part of His *Darshan*. Through unheard spiritual vibrations, unuttered words, Baba can bring about a silent transformation among the people. His very presence is a perpetual blessing. "When I first saw Him," said an American devotee to me, "I was thrilled and uplifted beyond my wildest expectations." The Divine's ways are always unpredictable. God is inscrutable. He moves in a mysterious way to perform His wonders. Divine

Love transcends the ups and downs, the vicissitudes of human behaviour. There, certainly, is a hidden purpose in Bhagavan's ways. His *Prema* is inexhaustible. One of His most moving declarations is that though men disregard Him, look upon Him with doubt, are ungrateful and do not recognise Him, His care, love and solicitude will never abate.

Many offer garlands to Him, or other things. They beseech Him for autographs. Sometimes if the devotee is lucky, the offerings are touched and given back. Flower garlands are invariably flung with an enchanting smile towards the devotee. "Not for you only," He adds mischievously, "share the flowers with others." There are a couple of young men dressed flamboyantly, with hang hair and "side-burns", typical products of our decadent, hybrid culture. Baba has no patience with such youthful aberrations. He speaks sternly to them. Some bring gifts to him. "I do not want your offerings," He gently reprimands them, "offer your heart's purity to me. That is enough for me." He often tells people that He is not a 'taker' but a 'giver'. He is a veritable *Kalpavriksha*—the divine tree of wish fulfillment. His generosity is as vast as the ocean.

Baba's humour is sparkling. I remember when a lady complained to Baba about her son's poor progress at school, Baba without batting an eye-lid told her, "Then the best thing is to attend school yourself." His jokes do not hurt. Nobody is happier than those of whom He sometimes makes fun. Baba's humour is like the soft dimples of light that appear on the surface of a stream or river when the morning sun shines upon it. His humour has a radiance which belongs to soft and fragrant rose petals, the iridescent rainbow which spans the sky, the cool showers of summer, the heart-warming smile of a child, the enchanting notes of bird song... He is not always soft and gentle. When He sees among the crowd someone who has cried and had been forgiven and still continues to be refractory, His reprimand acquires a sudden sharpness. Even the harshness is part of His Divine Mission, His ceaseless solicitude for His devotees. At such times, He is hard as a diamond, yet basically compassionate and understanding; *Vajradapi kathorani, mridunam kusumadapi. "Hard as a diamond soft as a flower"*.

Baba loves children. They sometimes break loose from their mothers or fathers and rush to Baba with a flower or a photograph to be autographed. Baba is always affectionate towards them. He pats them on their backs, and I have seen Him giving them sweets which just happen to be in His palm at the moment! He does not mind children prostrating themselves before Him although He is distinctly averse to *Padanamaskars* by the adults when He moves among a crowd of devotees. This hampers His progress and disturbs Him when he is engaged in some serious conversation with a devotee. He performs *Aksharabhyasa* for the children, by writing the sacred syllable "OM" on the slate brought by the child and guiding the little hands of the child gently and lovingly over the letter.

When old devotees come, He enquires about their welfare and sometimes calls them for an Interview inside His residence. He has a soft corner for such devotees as have travelled long distances for His *Darshans*. He asks them to come and stand before the Interview room in groups, talks to them at length and sends them away with *Prasad*. Baba loves people who are guileless and unsophisticated. These "Interviews" (a word which cannot adequately convey what is really a deep communion between the Lord and His *Bhaktas*) whether in Brindavan or at Prashanti Nilayam are tremendously significant.

To the devotee it is a real "red-letter day" when he is face to face with the Divine. To be in the immediate presence of Baba, to pour out the deepest feelings of one's heart, to bathe in the aura of His Divine Love, is indeed a rare experience. It is a moment of rebirth of the spirit, a miraculous transformation for the individual. He who keeps up in his deepest being the memory of these

precious minutes is indeed blessed. There is an expansion of consciousness, a resurgence of purest love, a clear awareness of the abiding values of life as the devotee stands in the Divine Presence, an intimate rapport with the deepest and most divine part of oneself. A spiritual "explosion" to use St. Martin's words, takes place, when our natural will is for a moment dispersed and annihilated by contact with the divine.

It is time to return to His residence. His return is a little tumultuous, the crowd eager to come closer to Him. The lines are broken, and many people rush toward Him. They know He is going back; they too must return home. When comes another chance? They want to touch Baba's Feet, do *Padanamaskar*, prostration at His Holy Feet. To an Indian devotee the touch of the Feet of the *Guru* is an act of absolute surrender. There is a little confusion. Volunteers have to be vigilant; otherwise Baba would find it difficult to extricate Himself from these numerous suppliants of His grace and blessings.

Now He enters the gate, quickly turns to the left and walks along the narrow path between the rose garden, and the bougainvillea hedge towards the Interview room. On the verandah outside are seated those whose stricken minds and sorrowful hearts await the touch of the divine healing balm of Baba's Love and understanding. Baba softly opens the door, enters, and beckons the devotees.... So He accomplishes His Divine Ministry day after day, wherever He is.

—*H. Sunder Rao, Brindavan*
(*article extracted from Santhana Sarathi 1974*)

No Prayer is Too Small

It was *Guru Poornima*, 2002. The conference for *Bal Vikas Gurus* had come to an end. I had one more day left in Prashanti Nilayam, before heading back home to California. I had yet to purchase small gift items to take back home to my SSE (Sai Spiritual Education) students. There were long lines to enter the store in those days (the new shopping complex had not opened yet) and I could not think of waiting for hours standing in the hot sun. Finally I spotted a tiny store, opposite the bakery, where they sold little pendants, pens, key chains, etc. It too was very crowded, but I somehow managed to buy a handful of little gifts—about a dozen sealed plastic packages, each containing 8 or 10 little mementos: key chains, pendants and brooches adorned with Swami's picture.

It was time for afternoon *Darshan*. My bags were packed and I was ready to leave. I was hoping for one final close glimpse of Sai Ma, but our token line was seated somewhere in the back half of the hall. As Swami gracefully glided in, I prayed mentally: "Swami, I shall be leaving in a few hours; we are no longer allowed to bring anything in the *Darshan* hall, but please bless the few mementos I have purchased for the SSE children. If you kindly look in my direction and perhaps nod or smile or raise your hand or something, I shall know you have heard this prayer". Swami glided by - no smile, no wave of the hand, not even a glance in my direction - and disappeared into the interview room.

Somewhat disappointed and dejected, I tried to rationalize: surely the Lord has more important things to take care of than bless a few trinkets. Look at this crowd of thousands, I thought,—each needing something or the other from the Lord, each praying perhaps for a sick child or a dying parent, or some pressing need. ... and had He not given me plenty already? How quickly and smoothly all details of this trip had come together, and how well I was looked after at Prashanti—wonderful people, inspiring talks, plenty of food for the body and soul! Who was I to ask for more? So thinking, with a heavy heart I left the abode of peace. ...

After a long journey of over 30 hours, I was home. As I opened my suitcase, a whiff of jasmine filled the air. Inside, on the lid of the suitcase was a grayish white patch. Directly underneath was the plastic shopping bag containing the children's gifts.

Each and every one of the little plastic packages was covered with a thick layer of Vibhuti, inside and out!

***No devotee too far
No prayer too small
Our sweet Sai Ma
Hears it all***

- Jeroo Captain, Granite Bay, California, USA.

What I Learned from Noah

Everything I need to know, I learned from Noah's Ark...

ONE: Don't miss the boat.

TWO: Remember that we are all in the same boat.

THREE: Plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah built the Ark.

FOUR: Stay fit. When you're 60 years old, someone may ask you to do something really big.

FIVE: Don't listen to critics; just get on with the job that needs to be done.

SIX: Build your future on high ground.

SEVEN: For safety's sake, travel in pairs.

EIGHT: Speed isn't always an advantage. The snails were on board with the cheetahs.

NINE: When you're stressed, float awhile.

TEN: Remember, the Ark was built by amateurs; the Titanic by professionals.

from the Internet

Quiz

Dear Reader,

Here are a few simple questions that test your knowledge of Sai Literature.....

1) WHAT IS THE VEHICLE OF LORD GANESH?

- a) SNAKE*
- b) MOUSE*
- c) TIGER*
- d) PEACOCK*

2) WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE RIVER WHICH FLOWS FROM LORD SHIVA'S HEAD?

- a) JAMUNA*
- b) SARASWATI*
- c) GANGA*
- d) BRAHMAPUTRA*

3) IN THE STORY OF THE RAMAYANA, WHO WAS THE KING OF THE MONKEYS?

- a) HANUMAN*
- b) SUGRIVA*
- c) LAXMAN*
- d) BHARAT*

4) IN BUDDHISM, WHAT WERE PRINCE SIDDHARTHA'S PARENTS' NAMES?

- a) RAMA & SITA*
- b) SUDDHODANA & MAHAMYA*
- c) JOSEPH & MARY*
- d) SHIVA & PARVATI*

5) IN CHRISTIANITY WHAT IS THE FESTIVAL CALLED WHEN JESUS CHRIST WAS BORN?

- a) EASTER*
- b) DIWALI*
- c) EID*
- d) CHRISTMAS*

6) JOSEPH WAS THE EARTHLY FATHER OF JESUS CHRIST; WHAT DID HE DO FOR A LIVING?

- a) BUILDER*
- b) CARPENTER*
- c) FARMER*
- d) PRIEST*

7) WHO WAS THE FOUNDER OF THE JAIN RELIGION?

- a) *VALMIKI*
- b) *VAAMAN*
- c) *MAHAVIR*
- d) *MAHADEVA*

8) IN SIKHISM, WHAT IS THE HOLY BOOK OR SCRIPTURES CALLED?

- a) *THE HOLY BIBLE*
- b) *THE HOLY QURAN*
- c) *THE GURU GRANTH SAHIB*
- d) *THE MAHABHARATH*

9) IN JUDAISM, ON WHICH MOUNTAIN DID GOD TALK TO MOSES?

- a) *MOUNT SINAI*
- b) *MOUNT HOREB*
- c) *MOUNT FUJJI*
- d) *MOUNT ZION*

10) IN HINDUISM, NAME THE LORD WHO IS THE CREATOR?

- a) *LORD VISHNU*
- b) *LORD SHIVA*
- c) *LORD BUDDHA*
- d) *LORD BRAHMA*

11) WHAT IS THE VEHICLE OF LORD VISHNU?

- a) *HAWK*
- b) *EAGLE*
- c) *FALCON*
- d) *OSTRICH*

12) COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING SENTENCE OR PHRASE FROM THE TEACHINGS OF BHAGAVAN SRI SATHYA SAI BABA.

"THE END OF KNOWLEDGE IS LOVE; THE END OF EDUCATION IS _____".

- a) *WORKING*
- b) *CHARACTER*
- c) *MONEY*
- d) *PRIDE*

13) WHEN BABA WAS BORN TO MOTHER EASWARAMMA & FATHER PEDDA VENKAMA RAJU, WHAT NAME WAS GIVEN TO THE BABY?

- a) *SATHYA NAM RAJU*
- b) *SATHYA SAI RAJU*
- c) *SATHYA NARAYANA RAJU*
- d) *SATHYA SAI BABA RAJU*

14) WHAT EVENT TOOK PLACE AT THE TIME OF BHAGAVAN SRI SATHYA SAI BABA'S BIRTH? WAS IT,

- a) *GODS APPEARING IN THE SKY*
- b) *BRIGHT LIGHT APPEARING IN THE SKY*
- c) *MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS STARTED PLAYING ON THEIR OWN*
- d) *PEOPLE SANG HYMNS AND BHAJANS*

15) WHAT WAS THE FIRST BHAJAN OR HYMN THAT SRI SATHYA SAI BABA SANG?

- a) *PREMA MUDITHA MANASA KAHO*
- b) *GOVINDA KRISHNA JAI*
- c) *SAI BHAJANA BINA SUKA SHANTI NAHI*
- d) *MANASA BHAJARE GURU CHARANAM*

ANSWERS:

- 1** b
- 2** c
- 3** b
- 4** b
- 5** d
- 6** b
- 7** c
- 8** c
- 9** a
- 10** d
- 11** b
- 12** b
- 13** c
- 14** c
- 15** d

A Unique Creation

Dr Michael Nobel on Swami's Hospitals

Dr. Michael Nobel is the great grand nephew of Alfred Nobel who founded the Nobel Prize. Dr. Nobel is also the Chairman of THE APPEAL OF NOBEL PEACE LAUREATES FOUNDATION. Below are extracts from a TV interview he gave to an Italian producer.

What is lacking in this high-tech, electronically orientated Western Society is the synergistic aspect of Spirituality. By this I mean the effects of the positive mind on the patient's health. The patient's belief system does not enter into healthcare considerations in Western Europe, except of course when it comes to psychiatric illnesses.

So I was very surprised, the first time that I visited the Hospital here, to see the number of large photos displayed of Bhagavan Sai Baba, as most Western hospitals might perhaps have one picture of the Head of State in the reception room. But I was informed that it was the patients who needed that, to provide spiritual support and the assurance that Baba was present to lend His support to the healing process. The psychological belief of the patient that a Higher Being will help him get well is largely ignored in the West. But history, my friends, abounds with incidents from the two World Wars for example, of soldiers who after being cured in hospital and told that they would have to return to the inferno at the front, simply turned their faces to the wall and died without any physical cause or reason for their death.

I think the whole structure and concept is absolutely marvellous. It is not difficult to find the latest medical technology and the world's hospitals are filled with expensive and advanced medical technology. It is also easy to find free hospitals. But a combination of the two, of a super speciality, highly advanced state of the art hospital that is free to the poor is a completely unique concept. And if we add the idea of Sai Baba's presence, the spirituality that His presence in the form of photos or His actual presence lends to the Hospital, it becomes a very unique creation.

Over the last 20 years I have been to dozens and dozens of hospitals and I work in a hospital and I know hospitals very well, but I have never seen anything like this on Earth. Everyone is there to help you, it is a wonderful feeling far removed from the national healthcare in the west which does not seem to work very well. I went to a hospital with my daughter in Sweden when she had a glass splinter in her eye and we had to wait 5 hours in emergency before we were seen - there were no doctors available. You can go to private healthcare but then you have to pay. But here this free hospital is really a marvellous creation.

Yes, I have been to Puttaparthi. I have visited most of Sai Baba's creations - the University, the Hospital that is there, the sports field, the library and so on and they are all marvellous creations. It is unbelievable that He has created this wondrous achievement based in a little village; it is really very, very impressive. And the medical facilities are just as good as in Whitefield - it is the same high quality and the same friendly staff.

So in summary, the impressive thing about the Hospital created by Bhagavan Sai Baba is the combination of the three aspects: state-of-the-art technology; free medical treatment and the healing powers of His presence instilling in the patient the firm belief that he/she will get well; this is something I believe Western healthcare would do very well to consider.

Hospital Statistics

BANGALORE SUPERSPECIALITY HOSPITAL

Cumulative Statistics from 19th January 2001 to 31st January 2005.

Cardiac Surgeries:	5,068
Cardiac Catheterisation:	9,340 [4,474-Diagnostic; 4,866-Interventional]
Neuro Surgeries:	4,460
CT Scans:	14,617
MRI Exams:	16,763

PUTTAPARTHI SUPERSPECIALITY HOSPITAL

Cumulative Statistics from 22nd November 1991 to 31st January 2005.

Heart Surgeries:	14,572
Cath Procedures:	14,987
Urology Surgeries:	25,490
Ophthalmology Surgeries:	25,140
CT Scans:	4,000